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MEMOIR

OF

HIRAM WITHINGTON,

(Unitarian.)

WITH

SELECTIONS

FROM HIS

SERMONS AND CORRESPONDENCE.

BOSTON:
WM. CROSBY AND H. P. NICHOLS,
111 WASHINGTON STREET.
1849.

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This Memoir has been prepared at the request of the Worcester Association of Ministers, to which Mr. Withington belonged. In preparing it, my design has been to give to his friends and his people as faithful an image as can be preserved, of the character of one who, as friend and as pastor, was equally esteemed and beloved. For the readiness with which material has been furnished me, I return my warmest gratitude; and for the freedom with which it is used I trust that no apology is needed, and that the delicacies and proprieties of personal feeling have not been overlooked.

In fulfilling this service of affection to the memory of a very dear and honored friend, I have endeavoured to present what might give the most complete view of his style of thought and the character of his mind. I have not felt myself authorized to withhold anything essential to express distinctly his opinions on all subjects of special interest to him. As part of his mental habit, his friends are entitled to expect a record of them; and, as the judgments of a truthful and conscientious mind, they are not wholly without their independent value.

Trusting that this little volume may be as acceptable to others as its preparation has been grateful to myself, I submit it, with the highest respect, to those who have honored me with the charge of superintending it.

J. H. A.

Washington, D. C., April, 1849.

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HIRAM WITHINGTON was born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, July 29, 1818. He entered the Theological School in Cambridge in the summer of 1841; was settled as pastor over the First Church in Leominster, December 25, 1844; and died, "among his kindred, and at his father's house," October 30, 1848.

It is rare that a life so brief and fragmentary has left an impression so entire, harmonious, and distinct. The strong devotional tendency which he manifested from his earliest years, the exceeding affectionateness of his disposition, making him singularly dear to those who knew him personally, his frankness and simplicity of manner, and the transparent sincerity of his judgments of himself, the readiness and good faith with which he offered sympathy or counsel, the

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beauty of spirit which was maintained and matured during the deep and sorrowful experience of his last few years, and the innocent yet very free and mirthful humor which so tempered the elements of his character, and made him as cheerful a companion as he was cordial and trusty friend, have all combined to strengthen and deepen that impression, and to make us desire that some memorial might be preserved to us of his character and his life.

Of his earlier years hardly any record seems to have been preserved, except in the affectionate reminiscence of a few friends, and one or two passing allusions in his correspondence; and his outward course was the uneventful one of a teacher, student, and pastor. So that his biography reduces itself almost entirely to the inward history and experience of the last ten years of his life; and the materials for it must be gathered from that delicate border-ground between what is personal and impersonal of his private and confidential correspondence, which has so much more to gratify our sympathy than our curiosity.

The few traces we have of his school-boy days show the same traits, in the main, which we find more fully developed afterwards. He was amiable and

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gentle, a favorite pupil, and especially "remarkable as a good reader,"—never among the rude and boisterous. When quite a child, his friends were often amused at the grave and mature tone of his conversation. As a proof of early decision and maturity of character, he was "often left with the entire charge of the school for a day at a time, and every thing would go on quietly and in an orderly manner." This was before he was fourteen. A year later, he was forward in organizing a temperance society and debating club among the boys, and indefatigable in getting up a library for it; "calling upon almost everybody in Dorchester, and the upper part of Roxbury." In spite of his general sedateness, among his intimate friends he was full of anecdote and fun, and had an irresistible propensity for repartee. "He delighted in telling humorous stories, ludicrous incidents, and in repeating poetry, of which he was very fond." Stopping once in a store on the Neck, he overheard some one boasting jovially of his luck in not having fallen once on the ice all that winter. "You know, Sir," says Hiram, "the Bible says the wicked shall *stand* in slippery places." Withal he was troubled with a certain diffidence and hesitancy of speech, which it cost him no small

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pains to overcome. "He had always lived at home, attended school regularly, and been left to follow his own bent out of school. He was very fond of reading, he was also very fond of the beautiful. He loved solitary walks; he loved poetry. As a boy, he was very little understood, and found almost no sympathy. The remarkable cheerfulness by which he was distinguished in after years was almost entirely acquired. When a boy and approaching manhood, he had a tendency to sadness, which was only overcome by hard struggling."

Till he was fourteen years old, he attended a common school, and afterwards, for two years, an academy. At the age of sixteen, he "came down to Hanson, and set up his too green and premature manhood," as teacher in a public school. In this he was very successful. A year after this, we find him teaching in one of the grammar-schools at Dorchester. At this period he "dates the beginning of his religious life"; and most warmly and gratefully he responded to the influence exerted by his pastor.* In all the traces that remain of this period, and till we know him more familiarly, the religious feeling is uppermost or exclusive. To the labors of

* Rev. Nathaniel Hall.

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the week in the public school, he added the more congenial labors of the Sabbath in the Sunday school. "He bore his full share in the deeper discussions at the teachers' meetings, and when in his turn he came to give the general lesson to the children in the school, so attractive was his little sermon, so simple and beautiful, delivered in a tone so impressive and sweet, that they would cluster around him and hang upon his words, enjoying at once the charm of his stories and the music of his voice." * These are the first distinct impressions we can gain of his mind and character, — in perfect harmony with what was the ground-tone of his after life.

Being small in person and gentle in disposition, he seems to have found the care of teaching no light burden. It was not in him to rule a school, so much as to win and instruct single minds. In the course of a half-pathetic, half-humorous exaggeration of the miseries of his condition, he says, (August, 1838): — "The heat of the weather and the labors of my profession have completely used me up, so that I have not one spark of physical or mental energy left, and might almost answer for a definition of nothing. My flesh has fallen away, and if

* Christian Examiner.

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I go on at this rate for a short time longer, my countenance will do to 'split a harpoon upon,' and were I to fall down, I should make a noise like a bundle of clothes-pins." It is thus likely that, at the age of twenty, his constitution was already becoming permanently injured by too early and severe labor; and the dread of this, probably, fell in with his natural taste and disposition, and the consciousness of growing powers, to lead his thoughts to the profession of the ministry.

His secret thoughts and wishes on this subject he confided to his pastor, and from him received the most encouraging sympathy. The feeling, being cherished and not suppressed, soon ripened into a purpose. Having "picked up a little Latin here and there, and laid aside the small income of his school," he set his heart steadfastly on following up the course of a suitable education. "His father opposed it a good deal, — very kindly, but anxiously. It seemed to him to be running a great risk, — to be giving up a certainty for an uncertainty, — to be aspiring after something beyond Hiram's ability to reach with any success, even if he had the means of carrying him through the preparatory studies."

The strong purpose and the conscious power over-

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ruled these scruples, and in the spring of 1839 he was established as teacher and scholar in the family of the Rev. Joseph Allen of Northborough. An enthusiastic delight in country life, strong attachment to pupils and friends, new intercourse and fresh opportunities of learning, made this a very pleasant season with him. The most interesting memorial of it is the close intimacy he formed with one of his pupils, a fine and intelligent boy of fifteen. "From the first night of our intercourse," he says, "we have loved each other without asking ourselves why. It was a mutual feeling of loneliness, an intuitive perception of affinity of heart, of deep and fervent affections, which first led to our interest in each other. We have been brothers since." His record of this friendship, contained in a letter to the same young man, five years later, in an interval of the sickness of which he soon after died, is so confiding and beautiful, that I transcribe a considerable portion of it.

August 13, 1844. — "From that first night when we lay folded in one another's arms, and pledged ourselves with such happy tears to be brothers to one another, there has never been a time when I have lost my interest in you, or been forgetful or unfaithful to that promise. And I know that your love for me has been true and faithful too. But you have not always known the

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anxious thoughts I have had in your behalf. You know that speculative turn of mind you had at Northborough, that love of argument, and that skeptical spirit, that often raised doubts for the sake of defending them. This cost me many prayers and tears. You remember that unhappy night, and that prayer in the woods on the following morning. I have the whole of our conversation written off, though I never showed it to any one. Well, I saw that dangerous tendency wearing away. Then came a time when you seemed most in danger of fickleness and a want of energy. Then followed a period when the world engrossed you, and your thoughts were all of being rich; and since that, a time when the earnestness of a manly aim seemed to desert you, — when your letters to me grew cold and dull and commonplace, and I felt that I could do you no good by writing. If you felt that my interest in you grew less at that time, or my love colder, be assured it was not so. But for a year or so I have felt as if you were growing thoughtful, earnest, and manly. And now I have seen in you that spirit of prayer, that religious sense, which I have always felt the want of in you. And how great a blessing this is, I cannot express. I have felt that now there was that perfect communion between us so long and so earnestly desired. I have prayed with you, with the feeling that our hearts were truly mingling in the offering of praise and the earnest supplication for God's blessing. Dear Edward, unspeakably dearer to me than ever before, let me give you a brother's affectionate and earnest counsels. . . . . Be faithful to the vows of your sickness. Live henceforth for God, and

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let no selfish purposes, no stubborn love of your own way, keep you from subjecting yourself entirely to his will. Read religious books, — especially the guide of the religious heart, the *best book*, whose perusal you counselled with such earnestness to others, when you thought you were speaking to them for the last time. Your influence over them will be greater than ever before, and imposes upon you a new responsibility. Strive that they may never see you prove untrue to those counsels you gave them."

Again he writes, a few weeks later : —

" Though there are miles between us, it seems as if you were very near to me, and I think I should still write this, even did I know you were in the world of spirits, for still I should have a conviction that you would know it, and it would be pleasant to think and write of you. I am sure when you are gone, the world beyond the grave will seem nearer to me, and who can tell what intercourse we may yet hold ? It is a good thing, Edward dear, to be out of the reach of the temptations of this world, and to live near to God and in communion with him, — to keep ever in your soul, what it is so difficult to do here on the earth, a still, calm Holy of Holies, warm with the spirit of devotion, — a fair, bright temple where the Infinite deigns to dwell, — an upspringing fountain, whose clear waters no turbid stream of earthliness, no floating dust from this world's atmosphere, is suffered to defile. And even now, as you lie on your bed of sickness and pain, I doubt not you have many a bright manifestation of God's presence, seasons of tran-

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quillity and peace, which you would not give up for any thing earthly. God be with you, dearest Edward, as I know he is."

His stay at Northborough was a little more than two years. During this time his mind ripened and expanded very rapidly. His chief intellectual need seems to have been, to write and talk himself clear on the subjects of chief interest to him. His correspondence he especially values "for the opportunity it gives of religious intercourse"; and some of his letters are very long and very earnest arguments, touching some point of speculative belief, — such as the presence of God in the soul, and the intuitive knowledge of right and wrong. And in this he was privileged with the intercourse of several near friends, of singularly clear and confident faith. The frequent visiting, too, of sorrow in the families of those he loved, and the frequent exercise of his willing sympathy and consolation, did very much to ripen and confirm his mind, and give him the outfit of character and experience with which he engaged in the more direct business of his profession.

For mental preparation, he says of himself, "I progress in my studies but slowly, yet with an increasing interest; and though with many doubts and

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fears, yet on the whole with increasing encouragement." Still, he yielded very much to his natural propensity to what was poetic and sentimental; and I do not think he ever clearly traced the connection between his imperfect knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and the ministerial duties he was looking forward to. Periods of distrust and misgiving there were, from time to time; but on the whole he put a good deal of confidence in that style and method of spiritual culture which accorded most with his taste and inclination. Not without a most serious sense of the greatness of the work in which he was to engage, yet with a determination "to be more of a man than a minister," and never to suffer books to stand between him and the living heart of men, he entered upon the course of study in the Divinity School.

"It was a very happy part of his life, these three years. He was in an habitually cheerful and busy state of mind, enjoying the present, and full of hope for the future; becoming more and more conscious of powers adapted to his chosen profession, and more and more desirous of entering upon its work." The tone of his mind became more firm and confident; his capacity of thought was quickened; and

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during his Cambridge life there was hardly any abatement to the cheerful courage with which he looked forward to his course. The new discipline was every way advantageous to him. Of his teachers he speaks in the terms of affectionate admiration natural to one who is thrown for the first time into constant intercourse with men of books and thought. His habits were never those of a student. His method of study was to keep the mind active, and appropriate the food within reach; to search for the materials of thinking and communication with other minds, yet jealously guarding his own intellectual liberty and that of others; and, when occasion demanded, to gather and combine very rapidly what he required for the work in hand. Keeping the main sentiment strong and constant within, the need or the mood of the moment made the only rule he practically acknowledged, and the only theory he knew for fixing the moment's occupation. Of the danger of this he was fully sensible, and he earnestly discouraged it in others; but with him the habit had been formed almost of necessity. And, with a strong purpose at heart, to work rapidly, faithfully, and to the point was of more account to him than to work ever so methodically.

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This apparent want of method was controlled, not only by his sense of duty and his sincere interest in the profession he had chosen, but by a strong natural good sense, which his sentimental and speculative tendency was never strong enough to overcome. The position he distinctly chose was that of mediator or reconciler of the extreme opposites of thought which he encountered. He was jealously sensitive of any supposed curb to the freedom of speculation, ardently espousing the cause and prizing the friendship of the "heretics" of the day, and pleading zealously for the right of all men to assume the Christian name, — a topic of warm controversy among us then : and, on the other hand, he characterizes with a lively impatience "the spiritual mystics, who are half Quietist and half Antinomian ; who make religious truth so very spiritual, that you can neither see, nor touch, nor comprehend it; with whom there are no such things as *means*, and but *one end* ; all motives but the highest are 'diabolical' ; all actions not perfectly spontaneous are false ; all things, spiritual and material, are reducible to 'unity' ; all questions and controversies are idle ; and all books are a 'humbug.'" Natural good sense and simple, unaffected piety were quite as

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prominent as any traits of character in all his intercourse with the School.

The ardent and positive turn of his mind made him also exercise himself busily with his favorite theory of a working church, — connected as it was with a natural desire to put it into practice. "If I have a church," he says, "it shall be a society for Christian action and reform; a peace, temperance, anti-slavery, charity, and *anti-wrong* society, all united in one." That he meant something positive by this he testified afterwards, by a very zealous endeavour to carry out his plan in his parish. Practice is a great check on theory; but as this plan was long maturing, so it was steadily persisted in, and made, perhaps, in his own mind, the most distinctive and prominent part of his life's labor. He gave full expression to it in the most elaborate essay of his composition while in the School.

And, so far as he looked forward at all, it was always to a country church. He had a shrinking from large towns; "would rather go on a mission to Kamtschatka" than be shut out from the constant presence of natural objects; and, with a temperament very susceptible to the influence of the changing seasons, had a passionate fondness for the

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glad or pensive intercourse with nature that the seasons brought about. Spring was a period of a certain sadness, "of longing and unrest"; summer, of extreme debility and depression; autumn, of a sober and quiet joy. The fondness with which he would dwell on the capricious and changeful play of natural things is pleasantly enough shown in this trifling incident of a summer's walk:—"I passed a large field of grain. The wind blew strongly, and it waved the wheat into undulating billows, like the water of the sea. Then it would cut itself a pathway, and rush down in one direction, a long distance; then all of a sudden it whirred round and round, and ran zigzag and all manner of ways, like a kitten chasing her own tail, or as if it was playing hide and seek. And all the while the little ears of grain were knocking their heads together, whispering and laughing like merry girls at a wedding. I stood and looked at it a long time." And again he says, in a soberer mood,—"I love the autumn time, so gentle in its approach, so silent, yet so certain, in its work of decay: and if it brings with it pensive thoughts and associations, they are not of necessity sad ones. The perishing shroud, which falls with the autumn leaf, and with it moulders into dust, is succeeded by

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a more glorious vesture; the spirit is 'unclothed,' only that it may be 'clothed upon' with the unperishing and stainless garments of the pure spirits of heaven."

Among these illustrations of his character and feeling at this period of his life, more will necessarily appear of the sober than of the sunny side. Yet it would be too great an omission, to leave out all reference to those other qualities, which made him so cheerful and pleasant a companion. The freedom and joyous activity of his life here were well fitted to bring such qualities into play; and they have left a peculiarly pleasant impression on all who knew him then. They will remember (in the words of one of his fellow-students) "his powers of conversation, always racy, suggestive, and valuable; his ready sallies of wit; his childlike mirthfulness at times, when he seemed to give himself wholly up to the exuberance of his feelings; his quiet humor; and, more remarkable than all, his inimitable power of telling a good story. It was wonderful what an endless store of anecdotes he had packed away in his brain. No matter what the subject of conversation, (if it were not by its character and dignity removed beyond the propriety of such things,) in-

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stantly he would illustrate it by some anecdote, so apt, so completely covering the point, that it would seem as if invented for the purpose, but that it came out without the least appearance of reflection, and he was always ready to give the name and place. He seldom repeated the same story; and yet I have known, in the course of an hour's conversation, an almost constant flow of anecdote, rich, full of humor, and always so pat to the point as to excite the irrepressible laughter of all who heard."

Of this eager and sometimes wayward and extravagant humor, it is in vain, of course, to attempt to preserve any tolerable memorial. Perfect goodness of heart and enthusiastic relish of a joke were quite as marked qualities in him as any of a graver nature. He would drive a play on words to distraction. A long and most intimate conversation with him might be half buried in a running accompaniment of laughter, and consist sometimes in a perfect cataract of puns; and withal he had a strange and grotesque aptness to parody old lines of sober verse, once making most merry thereby a walk half way to Dorchester. Often did the room ring, "in the dead waste and middle of the night," with the unrelenting storm of fun, that his inextinguishable humor

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would provoke. It is often a thin dividing line that separates mirth and wisdom; and the gravest conference might find itself unexpectedly pointed with a joke. I well remember the mingled glee and solemnity with which, when I had hunted up his house after a weary walk, he ushered me into the smallest of cells that would contain a single bed, with the grave salutation, —

"Ye mortal men, come view the bed
Where you must shortly lie."

It was part of his entire innocence that he loved just as well to make a joke the second time as the first, and to repeat his own, as well as those of other people. He honestly thought they were too good to be lost, and so they were. Some of his letters riot in this wanton and harmless humor, and a few signs of it will appear, here and there, in the intervals of his saddest experience. His friends treasured up jests for him, like favorite dainties for a child; and no one thing, perhaps, did more to keep up the genial, open, childlike temper for which he was always remarkable, and so to harmonize the spirit of boyhood and maturity, as this happy and buoyant faculty of mirth.

Not the least noticeable among his traits of char-

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acter was his frankness and readiness in giving counsel, and this point blank, as he "always despised a hint." Some indications of it have been given before, and many more will appear from time to time. It was no inconsiderable ministry that he had already exercised. The number of persons who were indebted to him for sympathy and advice (probably at critical periods of their life) is truly remarkable, as shown in his treasured correspondence; and not less so, the warm and cordial return he received of their gratitude and confidence. Some years before, he told a friend that the number of his regular correspondents was fourteen, and he must be punctual in writing, as he hoped to do them good. So that, being the repository of many personal confessions and much spiritual experience of others, an uncommonly full and large chapter of the human heart was open to his reading long before he was brought officially into a position which makes such confidence to some more easy. All this, while he was as far as possible from being officious or dictatorial. "The first advice I have to give you," he writes to a friend, "is *never to take any body's*. No man can adopt another's experience, so I beg of you never to take any advice of mine, though I

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assure you I shall give you a good deal. If I thought you would take it on trust, I would not give you a word ; for it is quite as much as I can do to take care of my own soul." And there is a mutual deference and modesty on both sides, which makes the full and frequent correspondence of this period singularly harmonious and beautiful.

The last winter of his Cambridge life he spent in teaching a public school in Hanson, where his residence was in the household of very dear friends. His teaching was no unimportant part of his livelihood (yet even this he was most open and liberal to share) ; and here is the way he proposed to earn the scanty emolument of a small country school : —

" Is there any lyceum, or any materials for one ? If not, can't your people be brought out one evening in the week to social reading meetings, or conversations about education and schools ? I should be very glad to utter my word on education, or, if you have a lyceum, give you three or four lectures. I want very much to give some religious lectures, — to present an antidote to skepticism and indifference, in a simple and common-sense view of religion. I thought, if I gave some Sunday-evening lectures, I might get some of the Orthodox to hear me. Is there any good place, and is this practicable ? If not, can I have the chance of preaching during the day, — of course without any

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pay? I may not attempt all this, though I want to make the winter an active one."

Elsewhere, he speaks of "physiological lectures" as part of his intended course. And all these were incidental labors, in addition to the ordinary cares and details of a common school, — part of his theory of a suitable training for his profession. Some of the records he has left of this winter's style of thought and work are contained in the following extracts: —

Hanson, February 8, 1844. — "What nature is to God, expression is to consciousness. Now, most persons live in the barely outward and phenomenal; they are content with the expression of things, whether there is any reality behind it or not. A few live in consciousness, and have no power of expression; but the true problem is to unite the two; for as thought is very imperfect and unsatisfactory without its appropriate dress in language, so the feeling or consciousness of things, however real, demands expression for its full perfection and highest gratification. 'The spirit of the living creature is in the wheels also.' Now I know I have a good deal of sympathy with the mass, — the great heart; but whenever I attempt to express it, or to act upon it, one of two things inevitably takes place, — either the expression becomes divorced from the feelings, and so I lose all personal interest in it, or else I cannot reach those whom I would, and so am thrown back up-

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on myself. I can never carry on a conversation with a social circle, but only with an individual, when I can say *I and thou.* I am a dunce at gossip, and social parties I hate. What shall I do?"

"I have n't studied any since I have been here. Two evenings in the week I have evening schools. Saturday evenings I give a lecture on education in my school-room. Sundays I generally preach; and the rest of the time I visit and give lyceum-lectures. . . . . One incident worthy of recording, which I shall never forget, I must relate. A little boy eleven years old was reading one day from 'The Elder's Deathbed,' when he burst into tears. He cried and sobbed half an hour; and afterwards, when I asked him the reason, he said it made him think so much of his dead mother he could not go on. Warm-hearted little fellow, how I loved him for remembering her! She had been dead two years, and his father had married again. That night I dreamed his mother came to me, and told me to give her little boy three kisses, and tell him she had sent them."

A retrospect of this laborious winter, and of the period of his life about to close, together with his anticipations and views of the special work for which he should be appointed, will be found in the two following extracts. The first is addressed to a young friend, "once his spiritual son, and now his brother," as he afterwards designates him; and sufficiently expresses the views he always cherished and adhered to.

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Hanson, February 14, 1844. — "Seriously, however, you have no right to make up your mind on the subject of miracles. The question is an historical one, to be determined on historical evidence. It is a question of comparatively little importance, not at all identified with the truth of Christianity. Still, it is not to be hastily determined. I have once doubted of the miracles, but I do not think I ever shall again. However, I have neither time nor disposition to go into an argument on the subject. But let me say to you, for I have learned it from my own experience, Liberty of soul is like the liberty of the press, though infinitely better than restraint, yet not without its perils. When the law of authority is removed from a man, he needs the more to reverence the law of his spirit. . . . . What you say of the unity of this world and the next is very true. We live in eternity, — in heaven, — just as truly now as we ever shall. We call a man one-sided, not because he does any particular thing, but because he takes false and partial views of things. You are not to be considered one-sided because you labor with your head, and not with your hands.

"When I came down here, I had three specific objects in view: — to keep an experimental school, to give lectures, and to try to exert an influence on people by social visiting and general intercourse. I have worked hard, and have got woful tired almost every day; but I have not accomplished either of the ends I had in view. My school is quiet, tolerably, — easy, pleasant, and the scholars are attached to me. Even some who came with the intention, avowed beforehand, of giving me

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trouble, are perfectly quiet and docile. My pacific and amiable principles have met with marvellous success; and I might say, changing the line of the poet a little, that

'Dolts remain to learn, who came to play.'

I cannot quote the other line with equal appropriateness, I fear, that

'Truth from his lips prevailed with double sway.'

On the whole, I have n't kept a remarkably good school; I cannot flatter myself that my lectures have done any particular good; and as for visiting, I have n't done any. Thus do a man's ideals vanish and fade away. Before he has had *time* to do anything, the opportunity vanishes. Thus at least it always is with me. I long to live a hundred years; yet every day the haunting thought comes up, that I have as yet done nothing, and that I shall have to die *to-morrow*, as it were. No thought is so constantly with me, none such a horror and a misery, as this of the rapid flight of time. This evening I came up to Richard's, and thought I would have a good time writing to you; but the evening is far spent, and I have not written what I would. But I must say good night, and, in conclusion, I feel like giving you this piece of advice. Settle with yourself what your life-work is to be, — what you can do, — and set about it earnestly and diligently, 'doing with your might what your hands find to do'; 'for the night cometh, in which no man can work.' One of the greatest curses of life is the thought of lost privileges and misspent time. Yet there is one thing more to be

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considered. When we have done our work, we have nothing to do with results. We have no right to calculate on them, or to be disheartened when we do not see such as we desire. But sometimes I take a *scunner* at myself, and come to think that, after all, I am not of half so much consequence in the world as I have been disposed to think. I get eaten up with a sense of my own meanness. But these things pass away, and again I come to hope, and to cherish my old ideals. But daily I come to feel more and more strongly that 'we walk by faith, and not by sight'; but thanks, all thanks, that we have a faith to walk by.

". . . . . Sarah had left a whole line of clothes out to dry; but about two o'clock the rushing of the wind, the rattling of mingled snow and hail against the window, the muttering of one or two claps of thunder, and the flapping of sheets and shirts, awoke me; so, bolting on my clothes, I rushed out and gathered up the scattered garments that were flying about in the storm like so many great white gulls. Rather romantic, was it not?"

Cambridge, March 11, 1844. — "I believe I was wise in not attempting to create a new religious movement there. It would either have failed, or raised a profitless breeze of excitement. I am most sorry that I did not devote more of my time out of school to my two most promising scholars, Calvin and Edward. I am more and more persuaded that my work is not to act strongly on the mass, so much as to do a good deal for a few individuals. It is the most delightful thought of my life, to think that two or three persons trace their moral and in-

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tellectual life to my influence. I feel with the mass in the great interests of humanity, but I do not feel as they feel, and I have not yet much confidence in my power either to speak to their feelings, or to make them comprehend mine. But I had rather tend a few sheep than a large flock; and I think I can sometimes gather up a straggling lamb whom others have cast off or forgotten. At any rate, I would rather have my small company wandering about over the hill-sides, and through the green forests, than to have them nicely penned up in the close and crowded fold, where they cannot stretch their limbs nor breathe freely. Even such as have had many a wayward ramble in rough and thorny places, the Good Shepherd may lead safely home at last, to lie down in green pastures and beside the still waters.

"But I am talking of myself as if there were nobody else in the world. But you will not wonder that I think much of myself just now, and of my work in the world, when I am just about to loose from my moorings here, to drift out on the broad ocean. Thanks that there is a pole-star to guide me, and that the helm is in wiser hands than mine! But between the listlessness of indifference and the tremblings of a spirit awed with glancing open-eyed at the responsibilities of life, I dread lest these threescore or less years should be lost between inaction on the one hand and uncertainty on the other. But I have no business with the future."

In July, 1844, he was one of the small class (of four) that graduated from the Theological School. His Dissertation, "On the Mystical Element in

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Religion," was inserted in the Christian Examiner;* and, excepting a sermon addressed to children, is the only piece of his writing that has appeared in print. As a preacher, he seems to have become at once popular, and to have displayed all those qualities of fancy, tenderness, devotion, and a gentle earnestness, that always characterized his public ministrations. A visit in Providence, to the sick-bed of the young friend spoken of before, and preaching in several country villages, are the only incidents that diversified the brief interval before his settlement.

In the early part of the autumn, he was engaged to preach at Leominster, in Worcester county; and as it is here that the remainder of his life was spent, unless when he was withdrawn from all active duties by sickness, this will henceforth be regarded as his home. His local attachments were strong, decided, and quickly formed. The bold and beautiful scenery of that region became very dear to him; and his personal affections speedily became concentrated upon a spot that was the scene of so much labor, sorrow, and spiritual experience. Hereafter I shall do little more than follow the course of his inward life, as told most fully and touchingly in his

* November, 1844.

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correspondence. The thread is almost unbroken; and there will seldom be occasion to use many other words than his. The next extract is from a letter written to a near friend and fellow-student, during this interval.

Leominster, September 27, 1844. — "I have had very small joys of late. That old feeling has come over me of the smallness and insignificance of life, — a certainty that I shall not accomplish what I wish; and anything short of that seems worthless. I have had a strange feeling, too, quite new to me, — a conviction that life was to be very short with me, and a willingness that it should. So strange is it, that, just on the realization of the hopes we have lived on for years, they mock us with their unreality. Something of old times, a halo of childhood, came over me, as, under a chestnut-tree, I looked far over the surrounding forests, with all their mellow tints, to the blue summit of kingly Wachusett, with his mist-crown, or again, paddling down the Nashua in a little canoe, where nothing but woods, and God's stillness, and the gentle sunshine were around me, and on the steep bank above old pines shot up their spiry heads a hundred feet, and whispered words of love and remembrance.

"Thus much for the passive side of your friend's present character, — the floating clouds that leisurely sail over his horizon. These few hieroglyphics, not unintelligible to you, may serve to show more than lies on the surface. Now for the undercurrent, — the still depth

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over which float azure and rose-colored clouds, and sweeping storms, and the bright sun makes many a revolution, but leaves still unchanged. To be, to do, to suffer, these are the means and present aims of life; the End is not yet. And these are all *active*, — summoning the strong man to gird himself for the struggle, and, shaking off the selfishness and sloth of subjectivity, and the poor fancies of a dreaming brain, go forth among 'things common and *unclean*,' to *work*, — manfully, earnestly, even to the soiling of his garments and his hands, — even to weariness and disgust and nausea sometimes. It is a comforting thing, when you come to look at it so, that when this poor, sick widow wants our prayers, and that degraded man our entreaties, and that weak young man our counsels, and that stricken, heart-broken mother our sympathy, we shall forget our own Etna in helping to lift Pelion and Ossa from hearts weak and overburdened, and thus perhaps do most to upheave our own heavy load. But none the less is our Etna a reality, that rolls back upon us when we are set free again; but we, like the Cyclops, forge there in its dark caverns, with sweat and toil, the celestial armour that enrolls us kings and chiefs among the armies of the gods."

The Christmas of this year (1844) was a bright and happy day for him. His marriage (with Miss Elizabeth Clapp, of Dorchester) had taken place a month before, on the 19th of November; so that the cheerful cares of hospitality, and the graver ones of ministerial duty, began together. Some of

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the dearest friends of his youth and manhood were gathered in his new home, to welcome him to the duties and privileges of his office. It was an auspicious and joyful celebration, — this prelude to so brief and laborious and sorrowful a ministry. To the services of the day, (which were afterwards printed,) he responded with affectionate gratitude. The simple hospitalities of his household were exercised with his own happy and genial spirit; and no one would have augured anything but hope in the new course thus auspiciously thrown open. From a letter to his former pastor, I transcribe the following account of the commencement of his parish life: —

Leominster, January 6, 1845. — "Everything thus far is as fair as possible. Nobody ever began under fairer auspices. Everybody is friendly, — everybody is pleased. I invited people to come and see me New-Year's Eve. About two hundred came, from far and near, — old and young. Everybody says to everybody, What a turn-out it is! — we never saw the like before. Just so at the ladies' sewing-meeting here, on Thursday. There were sixty-eight or seventy ladies present, — the largest meeting ever known. Then on Sundays they have come out like the doves to their windows, and filled my great church almost as full as at Ordination. Now don't be frightened, good brother mine, at all this chuckling. I know just as well as you

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do how much it is all worth, and how little to be depended on. . . . . I know them a great deal better than they know me; I cannot rely on present popularity, *and I do not.* . . . . . It is a fair field of labor and a wide, — hopeful and pressing. For myself, I am singularly free from exciting feelings, either of expectation or anxiety. I mean to *work*, — I trust to work successfully. Beyond this I have hardly any feeling about it. But enough of myself.

"And now let me go back to a review of the past, — an experience most singularly blessed, — a course not merely to be regarded as providential, but as peculiarly and unusually favored. Let me tell you here, what I think few can say, that I have never had an ideal that has not been realized, except that of personal character. I have been accustomed for years to feel that everything would happen just as I wished it should, and it always has. You gave me credit the other day for having worked my own way. No, Sir, not a step of it. It has always been made plain and smooth before me. Whatever of uprightness there is in me, whatever of upward aspiration or worthy purpose, is not merely first of all, but *solely*, by the grace of God. Whatever I have done, or seemed to do, it was not I that did it, but the force of circumstances, ordered by a higher Power."

To one who had been in the habit of both giving and receiving so much of intellectual and religious sympathy, there must almost inevitably have been a sense of chill and loneliness, at finding himself sur-

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rounded by comparative strangers. His heart naturally turned back to the companions of his thought and study, with a craving for the same intercourse he had so relied on before. "What I want to say is," he says, "that when any thoughts new and precious do deign to flap their wings over my poor brain, I shall be desperately glad to put some salt on their tails, and send them, all picked and spitted, down to you. For alas! there is no soul here that can digest such rich meats, — not a soul that I can talk my own talk to." This is partly the feeling he had expressed before, of his want of readiness in general intercourse. "This is one of my few troubles. Another, and the greatest, is the immensity of parochial duty, that threatens to fritter me into an intellectual atrophy, not leaving me 'leisure so much as to eat,' much less to digest, any fair amount of mental fodder. What you say of your position and experience I thank you for expressing; yet I think it is rather strange you should need such sort of troubles, while I, who seem to myself to need all kinds of torments and vexations, have never had any to speak of. However, I am *hopeful* on that point, and begin to look for clouds in the *shape* of a man's hand. But no poor sinner

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was ever favored with having things *just* right, as I have been thus far." What sort of pressure is here hinted at is perhaps more clearly indicated in the course of the few following extracts. As the burden of actual duty weighed more heavily, and the reaction came after several months' comparative excitement, his health would naturally suffer from the continued tension, and his mind recoil from the vague prospect of foreboding evil. The changing tone of spirits, and the gradual transition to a more sober view of things generally, are sufficiently apparent from his own words.

Leominster, March 2, 1845. — "I have got a good deal to say to you. For in good truth I am rather blue and dumpish. I do not know that I can get any help from you, but perhaps I can, and at least you will know how to sympathize with me. I am tormented in various ways. Here are two bad things at the outset. I have too much to do, and yet don't do half as much as I might. Then here are various problems presenting themselves to my mind with most appalling distinctness. 1. How shall I secure my own intellectual and spiritual culture, with so many things to occupy me, pressing heavily on my hands? 2. How shall I, with the necessity of thinking and writing constantly for others, keep *my* mental freedom? I am afraid of dying before my body does, which would be a most deplorable thing, don't you think? I seem to fancy you or some-

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body else asking me, some few years hence, 'What are you doing?' And I imagine myself replying, in dolorous drollery, 'Creeping out of the little end of the horn.' You see I am rather blue, — but these are sober questions, *very sober*. Don't imagine I am slumping yet. I wrote two sermons yesterday, besides making five calls, some two miles distant, and have got some stuff left, though I have preached at home ever since my settlement, except a day and a half of love-labors. But I know that my spontaneous thought is not just the thing for my people. What can be done to secure my own growth and freedom?

"There is some good to be accomplished by making men who can't recognize Christianity see and feel something of natural religion; but it is now a greater work with me, and more pressing, to preach Christ, — in whom and through whom we come to realize the religious souls within us, — the only name whereby we must be saved. The Bible, too, — I want to preach about that; but I don't know how. I want to urge its claims upon those who regard it with superstitious reverence, perhaps, but lack a living, rational, hearty belief in it. Now to such my belief must smack strongly of unbelief; and I dread to weaken what I seek to confirm. Sometimes I grow sick at heart, and think of the charms of a retired cottage under some green hill, with woods and brooks and birds and *liberty*, — liberty from responsibility too heavy, from petty duties and trivial cares, from a multiplication of labors so inefficiently done, — liberty 'to wander at my own sweet will,' and think my own thoughts, and do my own deeds. I

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thought the work of the ministry would always seem great and noble to me, — always satisfy my demands; but sometimes it don't. It comes to be small in its avocations and mean in its results. But enough of these things."

April 27, 1845. — "There are three changes in my life-philosophy which will sufficiently show you my present position. 1. Whereas I once had an ideal of *growth and culture*, I have substituted instead of it an ideal of *action for others' sake*, and growth and culture only incidentally on their behoof. It is not my work to climb up to the mountain-top that I may see stars, but down in the dusty road, to help this tired man wheel his barrow, and that poor woman carry her bundle. 2. Whereas I thought once that God had made people to be happy, I don't believe any such thing. Every man has his burden to carry, and it is about as much as he can lift. A man must do his work and not grumble; and so cheerfulness, which would otherwise be a thing easy and of necessity, becomes a duty and a virtue. By and by the circle will come full round, and the cheerfulness which was by faith shall be changed into the ecstasy of fruition. 3. Whereas I once thought of shedding abroad some new light in the world, and had some hope of doing *something great*, I have come to the conclusion that the world *was n't waiting for me at all;* nay, I 'm not quite sure I 've got much of anything to say to it, — half inclined to think it 's running away from *me*.

"Now tell me plainly what you think of all this. I 'm afraid you 'll call it rather *dowdy*, and not at all

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inspiring, — this ideal of a *country parson*. You see it is n't radical, but *conservative*, and that is true of me. I begin to feel it takes a good deal of a man's time and ability to strengthen the things that remain. If he can build on a wing here or there, or run up a new spire from the belfry somewhat higher than the old, or clear away some of the rubbish that the outer court of the temple is cluttered with, so much the better; but the first thing is to keep the old corner-stone sound and true. This ideal is almost too practical to be called an ideal, — eh? Well, what can you expect of a country parson? I have shown you the dingiest side on purpose. It doos not lack all inspiration, after all, I assure you. The old pile looks rather quaint in its architecture, and seems to be tottering here and there; but there is a deal of venerable beauty about it, and, chill as it seems, there are good warm embers on the altar that only want a little blowing to burn up into a bright flame. There, — what do you think of it? At least it will give you something to write about."

March 31. — "I have made two hundred and fifty calls, and have a hundred families yet to call on. I am delegate to a temperance convention, but can't go. Have ladies' meeting Wednesday, P. M., and teachers' meeting in the evening. Thursday, Fast and a wedding, and two sermons to write for next Sunday. Have had a bronchitis these three weeks, which is awful; but otherwise in good health and spirits. Yesterday a man asked me what I meant by my invitation to the communion; so I told him. I have since spent four or five hours in reading through the church records from be-

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ginning to end, and there is not a single by-law, and no restriction to my admitting to the church in any way I think proper. So I shall at least infringe no rule, do what I may. I have been perfectly astonished to find what a weight of authority the minister's voice has here. I never saw such a place in that respect. I fancy, too, I am getting popularity and influence with the young men; a good many come out to my Sunday evening meetings.

"But for all this outward success I feel dull and blue. I am not strong enough to do the work of this great parish; and in strong, sound, every-day, practical good sense, I do not come up to their demand. However, just now not a dog wags his tail against me. I shall keep a sharp eye to windward, and not take for granted that anything will be to-morrow because it is to-day. At the same time, I think they are about the best people in the world, and I should be sorry to lose them."

The natural results of over-work and constant anxiety were presently apparent. The bodily system was debilitated, and the energy of mind depressed. Besides the parish labor, there were the very anxious and wearing cares of his family,—his wife's feeble health, and the severe illness of his sister. In the multiplicity of things he was "harassed and perplexed, having a larger portion of the responsibilities of Providence than my weak shoulders were able to bear, like the man in Rasselas,

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who had the superintendence of the weather, and was almost crazy with anxiety." His constitution was not of that sturdy sort to endure the wear and tear of mental labor and over-exertion of the lungs. To speak always with straining and effort, and often in the exposure of cold and damp, was a gradual undermining of his frame, and made him very vulnerable to the attacks of the disorder he dreaded most. With the heat of early summer these symptoms were aggravated, as he describes them in the compressed diary style of the following account. Under the garb of forced humor, the brave and true spirit of it is all the more plainly seen.

June 25, 1845. — "I am still in the land of the living, though you may have begun to doubt it; but yet in a most questionable mood for a correspondent. A slight history of the past week may serve to show the preparations which have conspired to make me such a correspondent as I am. To wit: — *Saturday night*. Feverish and sick; throat sore; stomach disordered, &c. — *Sunday morning*. Rode nine miles; drank tea; preached. — *Evening*. Fever abated; voice do.; strength do. — *Monday morning*. Voice gone to grass; only able to wheeze through my gills; breakfasted on senna tea. — *Tuesday*. Voice audible and squeaky; took ipecac and three leeches, — the last *externally*. — *Wednesday*. Breakfasted on castor-oil; dined on nothing; took tea and a cold, out. — *Thursday*. This pres-

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ent. Tolerably comfortable and calm; yes, very calm; something like a half-drowned puppy. Still with a feeling that I want to go somewhere, or do something, or see somebody, I don't know where or what or who. I can't talk; I can't read; I can't write, as you will be able to testify. I am just like an elephant with one foot tied; — no, not that; more like those Brazilian sparrows that they fasten by a hook in their throat. Now I am not blue, — I do not think I am anxious, — yet it is n't in human flesh to think of leaving these green hills and the best people I shall ever find, with a prospect of relinquishing my profession in the end, — it is n't in mortal flesh not to squirm a little, let the high ideal of perfect trust and submission be as strong as it will. I do not ask you to pity me; I had rather you would commend me a little for looking all this calmly in the face, as I do this minute.

"My plans are definitely formed so far as this: I shall not preach for three months. If then I am well, (as really I have very little hope of being,) resume my duties; if not, ask my dismission at once, come to Dorchester, and find some pretty active employment for a year. Then, if my health permits, take a small parish with a small church, and settle very quietly down, 'one of those lesser lights,' that still shed out some feeble rays in a dark place. . . . . The probabilities, I have hinted before, are altogether against my ever getting rid of this bronchial susceptibility; and to go on preaching with that would be downright suicide.

"Now pray don't think of me as moping away my gloomy days 'like Patience on a monument.' I don't

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do any such thing. I ride about and enjoy myself, — that is, as well as I can. But as it is my opinion that the Lord, when he sees people making a fuss about his providences, always says, 'Well, they shan't grumble without a reason,' I think that it is best to bear it well from motives of self-interest. Now my 'country parson' reverence is rather shocked, and bristles up at this last sentence; but you will know what it means. It is a poor patience that only bears and blubbers: the true victory of faith is to overcome and rise above trials. However, I have n't come to the struggle as yet, and I don't intend to set up for a martyr till I find out whether there is any demand, and whether I am able to bear it. Father Taylor said a good thing the other day, — "Him that is n't willing to stand by God, naked and hungry and alone, the Lord will leave to stand by himself; but whosoever is willing to trust God being empty, God will trust him to be full." Write me, write me; I need it now; I must snuggle close up to my friends now, not as one that dreads the storm, but as one who would both be helped and help others to brave it, and keep warm in spite of it."

Having left his household in charge of a young friend and relative, he spent a portion of the summer in unwonted quiet and recreation. Of the comparatively free and wandering life of this period, when the repair of bodily health seemed to be the first duty, there is very little to tell. At one time he is seized with an enthusiasm for hard labor, and con-

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jectures that Providence may have meant him for a farmer; at another, he is giving counsel and direction for the charge of his family, or sending flowers, with a few pleasant words of remembrance, to the children of the Sunday School. In many of his letters he indulges freely in his propensity for what is ludicrous and grotesque, — a propensity, he says, which "sometimes besets me even in the company of the non-elect, and I have to struggle against it for religion's sake"; and again his strain is more sober than his wont. Among the more thoughtful and religious meditations of this period are the following: —

Dover. — "In this quiet seclusion I get calmed and strengthened spiritually as well as bodily. I feel that it is just what I need, either as a preparation for renewed duties, or the trial of separation from my people. What lessons of calm trust, of unwavering faith in God's providence, one drinks in from the book of Nature! What a storehouse has she, indeed, of all *celestial arcana*, — what a ready sympathy for all our states of thought and feeling! And yet we must not forget that Jesus is the interpreter of Nature's voice. If he had not christianized Nature, she would not be to us full of all glorious truth, as she is. Or rather, with the eyes which he has made to see, we discern in all its clear beauty that latent wisdom and truth of Nature, which was but dim and

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shadowy before. It does not seem to me that you do justice, I will not say to Jesus, who indeed demands nothing of us, but to the personal relation of the soul to Jesus. The doctrine of life in and through Jesus — the old doctrine of atonement — seems to me to cover a great truth. The atonement of Jesus, I think, consisted in these two things: First, he brought man to the truth, and so reconciled him to God. By the power of his life and death he brought the affections and desires of the soul to a state of recipiency; he led men to desire and seek the truth. But how were they to find it? It lay so far from them, there was such a gulf between them and the Deity, the embodiment of the truth, that they could not even see across the space, much less reach up to grasp that which they could not discern. In the second place, then, Jesus brought the truth down to men, — made it actual, living, tangible, in his example. Thus men were able to comprehend it, — to seize hold of it and live it out. Thus all religious truth became henceforth Christian truth, and men see it through Christian teaching, and receive it through Christian influences. Thus Jesus might say, with strict propriety, 'I am the *door* of the sheep. If any man will enter by me, he shall go in and out and find pasture.' Religious truth has a human and a Divine side. Jesus showed its human phase, and thus led men up till they could look upon the splendor of the Divine.

"But when we have attained to this point, is the human side to be neglected or overlooked? Does Jesus, having led us as far as he could go, leave us to proceed on our way alone, so that we turn back to bid him fare-

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well? I think not. When we do leave him thus, I think we lose a little of our clearness and certainty, something of the warmth of our devotion and the quickness of our conscience, and much of our sympathy with man as man. We cease to be brethren of the race, and become only brethren of a few. The time has been when I thought I saw this result in you. Either I was mistaken, or you have changed your position a little, and come back towards Jesus and man, — into closer sympathy with human kind.

"Somehow, I write laboriously of late. There seems to be a little blur over my faculties, as well as a cloud over my prospects. The freshness of my early inspiration has spent itself for a season. But I am conscious of a deeper current in my soul, though it be not apparent, and I know that life, like outward nature, must have its seasons. And though the trees are stripped leafless in autumn, and the streams freeze up in winter, it is only a wise provision for the coming spring-time. — And I have been left alone of late for the first time for years, — alone on a wide, wide sea, and I had wellnigh sunk. But afar off in the East I dimly saw a little boat, and I held up my head boldly, for God was in it.

"As for me, I am 'walking with God' here in the bushes, learning submission and tranquillity of spirit. It may not become *me* to say it, but I should dishonor my Teacher not to hope I am improving. With plenty of leisure to think all manner of gloomy thoughts, — with a loneliness that sometimes makes me shudder with chilliness, — with a dismal, dark, drenching rain as you could wish, — yet I sit writing in my chamber this afternoon in a state of unusual happiness."

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Leominster, September 19. — "Hard times I have had since I wrote you last. Yet no, — the sweet is more than the bitter, thanks to the mingler of life's draught; and in this time of 'golden leisure' I have been putting out green leaves, and now I feel as if my flesh was coming to me again like the flesh of a little child. Strangely content and happy, I live a charmed life, — my future uncertain, I am afraid *dark* to fleshly eyes, yet causing me little solicitude, — my garden of souls running to weeds, at least for all culture of mine, yet I have no sense of burdensome responsibilities. Do not suppose these feelings are uninterrupted, or that I have come to them without struggles. If you ask of my health, it is good, — my throat scarcely better, yet willing to improve when I give it perfect rest. . . . . You have sometimes said I wrote nothing as if I was married. Why should I? Let that speak for itself. My wife is a white dove. Do you suppose I have been a minister so long without any plans? My old problem of the Church bides with me yet. Something must be done. These things I want to attempt: Free communion, social life, and benevolent action in the Church. What have you to say about this? I have a definite plan of action, if I am permitted to act again. 'The earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that nurseth upon many things'; and so, good night.

"I think we try to do too many things. Do you know of any minister who seems so far to have realized his ideal as would content you? What is the reason of this poverty of achievement? It tempts one to go back to the ideal of self-culture, in which all duty is resolved

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into living out one's self. . . . . My two great aims were, to get at the young men, and to awaken the sentiments of religion. The practical side of Christianity had been well developed; people needed the spiritual principle, — the feeling of the heart. I have had no church accessions, — but one baptism. Can nothing be done to save these two precious symbols? Then in speculation I find no certain or confident resting-place, — content even to get an olive-branch of promise, testifying that somewhere beneath the turbulent waters of controversy there is dry land enough to rest one's *sole* upon. I ask my venerable brethren of this and that, and they are uncertain and wavering as myself. Sometimes I want to live a Methusalean life; — sometimes, if I only were concerned, I would like to die to-morrow. If I cannot preach this winter, what shall I do? Can I write for anything to get money? If I have to give up my profession, what can I do? I am trying to learn to saw wood in case of an emergency. Do you pity me? I am sorry for that. Doth the Lord '*pity his children*'? I trow not; or if he does, it is as a father pitieth his child, who cries for the red hot poker which he in mercy denies him. Don't suppose I am indifferent to the suspension, or perhaps the destruction, of all my hopes and plans; but I know that the true man 'shall not much remember the days of his life, for God answereth him in the joy of his heart.' Will my optimism serve me when the trial comes? Do I seem foolish? I never felt so wise. Unnatural? I was never more unaffectedly sincere. These few days past, I have seemed beautiful to myself, like the autumn woods; or

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like a glowing coal all alive. Yet I have done nothing but revel in the joy of my musings, questioning all the while if the life that seemed ready to gush out of me ought not to be bestowed somewhere to some purpose. But Nature seemed to say, 'No, let the sponge drink in as it will from this fountain, — don't squeeze it.' . . . . .

"Then your idea that I had 'derogatory views' of the minister's work and position. Never did I estimate them so highly, — regard them so reverently. Yet I know I am a true minister to not more than a dozen of my people, and how can I be satisfied with this? No, it was not that the aim did not seem to be great and high enough 'to fill an angel's heart,' but the beggarliness of our poor achievements I was groaning over.

"My love and hopes to ——. When I see her, I think sickness is a beautiful and almost coveted experience. I know the good God never cheats us, but gives us always so much for so much; and when the poor body pines and aches, and languishes, the spirit is oftentimes full-fed and developing new energies and more divine powers. Many of the fairest flowers sow themselves by darting their seeds, arrow-like, into the soil where they germinate."

September 24. — "I do not know that you know from your own experience, as I do, how fresh and real the first spring of a religious life is, — a new birth of the soul. But with most, the freshness of that living growth soon passes away, and having brought themselves up to about the average standard of those who are called good Christians around them, they halt there, or ever after go on vacillating between good and ill. But mark, for illus-

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tration, the rapid growth of a new-converted man, — or say a Washingtonian. If he could go on for a lifetime as in the first year, what a great man he would make! And in a religious sense, a true man can always find habits as dark, elements that seem as base and low, to emancipate himself from, as that of drunkenness. But our plans of growth and progress have a finiteness about them that spoils us. We get to a certain point, and then our life becomes a thing of custom, fashion, or what not, — loses its living, internal character. But if every day's life could be from within, — if God could always act through us, and the Divine be a perennial spring within us, what nobleness might we aspire to! Is it all a dream? has the fiat gone forth that no man shall realize his plans and aims? Then were it better to die than live! For to follow, like the old post-horses, an ear of corn, day in and day out, and never overtake it, or approximate towards it, is a life mean and miserable, not worth the living. But how to find Him whom neither height, nor breadth, nor depth can reach, but who is never far from every one of us? Were I to define the process, I would say, First, sift down your own motives, and make them as pure as possible, — nay, determine that the great question, the only question of life, shall be, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' And secondly, use the means of religious growth, — the old-fashioned rules of devotional culture, — meditation, self-examination, prayer. Alas that our desire should be, not devotion itself, but the good that comes of it! I cannot say what another should do, but I would say, Let him rejoice and thank God who in sincerity and fulness

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of heart can daily kneel down and commune with the Infinite; and if any consecrating power of habit, of times and seasons, of thoughtful meditation, can bring to him one truthful, yearning aspiration after the Father, let him cling to that as the dearest portion and joy of his soul, the promise of his progress and prosperity, the talisman of his inward peace."

Towards the end of September, he resumed his labors at home; taking the physician's counsel, "to go to preaching, and provoke his throat to get better or worse." He encountered very cheerfully some threatening symptoms, and laid out a large work for the future. His own thoughts and recent experience he hoped to embody in a series of "Letters to the Sick," — doubting only "whether I, who need to fill up the reservoir of thought, and leave the waters to settle into stillness and purity, can afford or shall do well to take off the cover, and let the scanty supply, already too much taxed, evaporate still further." His "great Church movement" he hoped to begin with the opening of another year. And, up to the limit which his state of health allowed, he seems to have been busily engaged in all the ordinary cares of his office.

But Providence had other things in store for him, and a deeper sorrow than any he had undergone as

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yet. The discipline which had compelled him to look sickness and pain, and the prospect of early death, steadily in the face, had been only the preparation for what was yet to follow. On the 3d of December, his wife died, leaving an infant, a few days old, to his sole charge. It was with a peculiarly fond, tender, trusting affection, that he had always spoken and thought of her. Usefulness and a happy home, he had told her long before, were the only two things he had to live for. And, in his affectionate and sensitive nature, this sentiment formed the invisible centre, about which his thoughts and plans revolved, — the silent and gentle constraining power, that maintained the rest in balance. And it could not receive so sudden and rude a shock, — however it might be met with manly resignation and Christian trust, — without deranging permanently, in some measure, the healthy and harmonious action of his mind. The effect was more deep and lasting, that it was so powerfully controlled, to all outward seeming, by conscience and will, and an active religious fancy. And the shadow of this great sorrow deepened as time went on, only to be very gradually supplanted by the later light of hope.

The few expressions he gave of this early feeling

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are tender and beautiful. Their long and intimate connection had been to him a precious privilege, and an untroubled dream of love. "You know," he says, "how pure and heavenly our love was, and how her innocence and saintliness had hallowed and refined my more earthly affections. Time and again it made me weep to think how pure she was." Wife of a year, and mother of a week, when danger seemed past, and hope was confident and strong, she was taken suddenly, and left him sorrowing and alone. From his words of tender and touching resignation we gather the appropriate and only needful comment on this mournful chapter of his experience. We see how faithfully he had learned to apply his own words of consolation and trust.

Boston, December 6, 1845. — "The Providence that made me a father has left me a bereaved and desolate husband. My white dove has flown upward, yet still she cometh again at times, to bring an answer to my prayers, and minister strength to my fainting heart. You will not wonder that I have thus far been calm and strong. I know not yet the heaviness of the trial, and I have felt from the first her presence sustaining me. How I shall bear it I do not know. I hope, with Christian serenity and cheerfulness. I trust to live so high and pure that she shall be to me an ever-living presence. Night before last, when I went to bed, there

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came strange, wild fancies, and half-delirious images, — sometimes harsh voices, and then her gentle and tender tones. I was not asleep, I was not trying to think, but these things seemed to belong to the senses rather than the mind. The last thing I remember, I saw a great harp, and it seemed as if it were my heart, and there stood by two furies and clutched at its strings with their claw-like fingers as if they would tear it in pieces. But then a soft hand was laid across them so gently that it scarcely seemed to touch, and the chords were still and calm as a waveless sea, — and I fell asleep.

"Yesterday was her funeral at Dorchester. I was happy, and could not help feeling grateful for the beautiful day. I contrasted it with the bright, clear evening of our marriage a year ago, and it seemed fitting that this should be brighter and more glorious. That was a marriage of earth, — this was a bridal of heaven. It seemed fitting that Nature should put on her white robes and her diamond ornaments when so pure a spirit took its flight. I felt that God honored me in calling me thus to give her to him. With reverential joy I could almost say, God taketh her not away, but permits me to give her up, so that I may receive her again; and thus does he make our affections immortal when he makes their objects immortal.

"I have no right to complain, — all reasons to be thankful. Had I loved her less, I could not bear it so well. But these years of our union have blessed me with more and fuller happiness than often comes in a long life. Blessed be their memory and hers, in ministering sweet influences and sanctifying hopes, and

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may God help me to show in my own example the serenity of faith that I have preached to others as the Christian's duty and privilege."

Leominster, *December* 17, 1845. — "True, I have stood face to face with stern realities, and the angel of Discipline is bruising from my heart the black blood of selfishness; but the blessed angel of my love stands by me, also, to pour the oil of healing on the smarting wound. You know I have had all possible consolations, — the blessed memories of seven years of happiness, full and perfect enough to make me all my life thankful to God, bring the future what it may, — the very tenderness and fulness of sympathy from many a heart, — and what is dearest of all, next to my faith in immortality, a constant sense — I was going to say a *consciousness* — of the presence of the departed. It is not sight, nor sound, nor touch; and yet there are times when I see and hear and feel her presence; and now I *know* that I believe what I was not quite sure before would bear such a test.

"And as at such times one is brought nearer to the spiritual world, and almost comes to feel that its atmosphere is around him, and a vision only a little more purified would give him actual sight and communion with its inhabitants, the prayer rises from the heart, that he might evermore dwell there; and so, living henceforth in and for eternity, whatever is merely of time should be indifferent to him, and 'not enjoyment and not sorrow be his destined end and way.'

"And then the soul does feel it a sort of privilege and glory to be honored with trial, and, gathering itself

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up in its conscious eternity, feels that neither its love nor the joy it gives can ever die; and, looking forward, it beholds that coming time when the trials and sorrows of this mortal life shall seem but as clouds that on a summer's day flit over the sun's disk and pass away. And so it is strong.

"It is very pleasant to me thus to speak to you in the perfect freedom of confidence; for, kind and hearty as are the friends around me, there is no one who can fully understand my feelings, and what is sometimes spoken for consolation seems trifling or profane; like the well-meant remark of one man, who told me 'it was a great mercy these things wore off in time,'—as if the next best thing to the presence of those we love were to forget them. So I am shut up alone with my own ideal and my ministering spirits.

"There is one thing that I feel deeply in closing this letter,—that, to a stranger's eye, and perhaps to your too partial friendship, it shows me higher than I am; and a fear, too, comes upon me, that I shall fall back from what is only a mount of vision to me, and not the plane of my daily walk."

December 31.—"My health is not very good. Living the last month in a state of extreme nervous excitement, and compelled to do a good deal of mental labor, I have got worn down. I hardly expect to stay here another year. My throat is troublesome again, though I use it as much as I want to. It would be hard to go away, yet you will not wonder that all other trials seem light to me now. And though life still looks cheerful and happy to me, and the world is as far from being a

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'vale of tears' as ever, yet you can understand how everything but duty should seem almost indifferent to me, — everything but duty and death. Sternly beautiful stands the former to me, and I feel consecrated anew in the baptism of sorrow; but O, how welcome at any moment were the latter, — how great a privilege if to-night I could lie down in my last sleep, to wake in the light of her smile, and the morning of her eternal blessedness!"

January 27, 1846. — "I am happy, for everything is indifferent to me. Duty is sacred, life is beautiful, eternity dear, — more sacred and beautiful and dear than ever before. I am happy in isolation. What I dread most is that I should wish to live again; what I desire most is to die. But I am cheerful, joyous even, for I am not alone. The sunlight, with its blessed rays, looks in at my windows, and it is more beautiful than ever, for God's smile and her's are both in it. The fir trees, blossoming in snow-wreaths, wave their branches in the wind, and I love them, because she saw and admired their beauty. Home is dearer to me than ever, because it was her home; yea, it is her home still. And I seem to myself a being better and more sacred and higher, because one who has *gone up* loves me.

"I had almost rather my little child, so unspeakably dear to me, were with its mother. I am afraid it will make me wish to live. I am afraid she will want it there.

"Every body here wonders to see me appear just as I always have. I dare say many suppose I am almost heartless, — a very stock. All that is perfectly indif-

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ferent to me; yet I wonder at my cheerfulness just as much as other people do."

"I well remember," writes a friend, "how painfully delightful was our visit to Hiram, a few weeks after his wife's death; how he met us with all the warmth of his nature, and discharged so simply, and so affectingly, to us, all the offices of host and hostess; and how anxious he seemed to be that we should find everything as comfortable as if she could have welcomed us. He lighted a fire in the parlour, saying, as he did so, with a sad but cheerful smile, that it seemed almost wicked to light that fire there. Elizabeth had placed the wood in order, ready for kindling, two months before, and he had not brought himself till then to light it. He had hung up in his chamber, just after her safe confinement, (as they thought,) a beautiful engraving of the Madonna and Child; and he said, as we entered the room, that at first he could not bear to have it hang there after her death. It seemed as if it had no business there, and his first impulse was to lay it in the bottom of his trunk, never to be taken out. These are trifling incidents; but they illustrate the exceeding warmth of his nature, and show how bitter must have been the struggle to maintain the

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beautiful calmness, and even cheerfulness, that so astonished and charmed us all."

These little incidents, and the record of so trying an experience, will not be without their interest to those who knew Mr. Withington as a friend. They will know there was nothing overstrained or insincere in his transcripts from his own feelings and the interpretation of his life's experience; and it will be gratifying to them to trace the deep and lasting impression on his mind, of an event so powerfully forcing the tide of hidden affections and emotions from its ordinary channel. Few persons have spoken so familiarly as he, from his early years, of spiritual things as near and present. To few was the boundary between this life and that to come so thin and transparent, or the sentiment so habitual and constant, "I am not *to be*, but *I am*, immortal." And so the three great means of human discipline — labor, pain, and sorrow — were alike sanctified to his willing and receptive spirit by the immediate touch of the breath of Heaven.

His words, spoken long before, recur in this connection with added meaning: "The ideal of pleasure is gone; its successor, the ideal of æsthetics, has vanished also; and now nothing is left but the

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ideal of action." To this he now earnestly and manfully addressed himself. His "great Church movement" he had designated as his task for the opening year. His views of it were so large and general, and at the same time so specific and distinct, that he found very few who could give him the aid of an understanding sympathy. To a friend he writes :—

January 28, 1846. — "I am particularly desirous to see and to talk with you, now that I have the gift of utterance again; and the rather, because I found more sympathy and interest in my *Church movement*, on your part, than any body else had ever exhibited, (except one,) and, of all the brethren, you alone have given me any encouragement, or seemed to have any faith in the attempt. Well, I have plunged *in medias res*, if that which is so intangible as the Church can be said to have a substantive existence, or a 'midst' to it. I have had two social meetings, at which *I conversed*, — sixty or seventy persons being present; and we have chosen a committee to report 'on the present condition of the Church, and any measures which may promote its welfare and efficiency.'

"This is the matter nearest my thought at present, so I have written about it. You will know that *at heart* other things are pressing. And I have no need to say, that, for the many words of kindness that have been most welcome and cheering to its desolateness, I thank God and those who have bestowed them."

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A part of the correspondence which followed with a friend, who did not enter so hopefully into some of the details of his projected movement, may serve to present more clearly the precise point at which he aimed.

February 3, 1846. — "I take 'the Church' as Providence and the community find it for me, and speak honestly of every form of Christian influence that comes to us in a regular way, as the Church. Neither do I care to mark out a supposed scheme of duties for the organization called by that name. I follow the tendencies of the system of things I find ready to my hand. If benevolent action can be most conveniently and effectively carried on by 'the Church,' very well. If by a 'society,' or 'sewing circle,' or 'benevolent association,' very well again. And if the organized body meet (and, so far as I see, can meet) only for religious meditation, and communion, then I do the best I can in that way, seek to stamp the impression deepest where I can, and am content. If I had a Church to make all new, and its work to prescribe, I don't know how I should prescribe it. Meanwhile, I am thankful to be saved that hazardous responsibility. I confess to a little impatience at having anything put upon me, or even hinted at, else than the quiet gathering up of the threads of religious and moral influence that lie scattered about me, and the patient weaving of them into *my* fabric of duty and faith. If you ask me what 'the Church' is, I do not pretend to explain, though I have

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my notions. If you ask what the Church is *here*, I know pretty well, — at least I think I do, — and that is enough for me." To this he replies : —

February 3, 1846. — "Your remarks upon the Church are just as unsatisfactory as everything else upon the same topic ; and if I had leisure, I should like to write you half a ream — no, I mean a quire — upon it. You know it has *possessed* me a good while, and I cannot get rid of it by prayer or fasting, nor will it be exorcised by any such intangible statements as those in your letter. The 'obfuscation' remains, and you will not be able to remove it, without an increase of faith. The more I think about it, the more I don't see what the Church is, or what can be done with it. The question is as important to my mind as this : Are we to labor for the perpetuity of the Church as an organization, — Church, or no Church ? It seems to me one who does not see the matter in this light is blind to the signs of the times. Who talks about the Church ? Who pays it any attention ? Who joins it ? If it be worth nothing, then let us help tear it down as a cumberer of the ground, or at least suffer it quietly to die out. If it have any value, let us see what it is, and how it is to be sustained and made efficient. These seem to me not only practical, but *pressing* inquiries. I believe I have made you acquainted with all my movements till *datum*. The last thing done was to choose a committee to report on the present condition of the Church, and any measures for promoting its prosperity and efficiency."

So far as the practical features of his plan were

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clearly defined, they seem to have been these. Taking advantage of the recognized central Church organization, he would make it the centre and source of all religious and charitable action. There should be as it were a league among all the forms of Christian action, so that each should have a real connection with the Church proper. Thus, a committee was chosen "to seek out the necessitous, and apply the means for their relief." The Board of Directors of the Ladies' Charitable Society should consist in part of Church members, selected by the Church itself. The Sunday School should be distinctly understood to be a school of training for the religious character, and with the view of adding steadily to the Church's strength. In the School he was laborious and indefatigable, seeking out and urging reluctant scholars, holding teachers' meetings, addressing the children frequently, and taking an active part in the Sunday School movements of the county. Of this large circle of operations he himself was, of course, the centre and the head. "He was what I term *a live minister*," writes one of his parishioners. His labors in visiting were very great, — amounting, the first year, to five hundred and fifty, and, the third, to eight hundred, parochial visits. To

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the sick and afflicted he was very attentive; and the nature of his own experience had opened to him avenues of approach to them, and made him peculiarly welcome and acceptable as a messenger of consolation. Among other things, he founded a "minister's library" with a donation of fifty dollars, from a bequest made him by one of his parishioners, — thirty more being added by the ladies of the society. Many of the details of his pastoral labors will appear in the course of his letters which follow. Meanwhile, it will be interesting to trace the thread of more personal and private feeling, interrupted for a while by this pressure of external care.

March 4, 1846. — "I am between two fires, whichever way I look, but am not consumed, — scarcely scorched. Do you remember how in the furnace there was a *fourth*, like unto the Son of Man? Fable as it is, it has a beautiful significance. Between the pressure of outward duty and inward thought, I am continually exhausted. Yet my security and enjoyment are in action, and I do more than ever I have done. I long for more quiet and leisure, for I am afraid of being used all up intellectually; besides, you *know partly* how delightful is the liberty to stop and think, and to have time for study. I would fain seek a quiet and a smaller place. On the other hand, duty binds me here. Never a man had so fine a chance to do good: people all feel more

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than kindly — *tenderly* — toward me. The *admiration* makes me tremble, for it cannot last; but the *love*, I think, will. But what I am gladdest to see is the religious interest that is springing up here and there, in a very quiet and natural way, — some few young people, too, manifesting it and their confidence toward me in a very pleasant manner. Then, again, here is the dear home, — so sacred, so blissful still, — my only home : if I should be forced to leave it, I should be an outcast in the world. Everywhere else I am desolate. As I have just written to a friend, 'Dorchester is too populous for me, — too thick-peopled with memories; its very wayside stones are burial monuments of hours of gladness flown; and not till they have had their baptism in Sorrow's tears can Faith entwine them with the flower-wreath that tells of a resurrection. But I know that spring will come again, and the flowers. And the dewy tears of Sorrow's night shall give a fresher verdure where they fall, — a chastened but perennial beauty.'

"But you see how dear this home is to me, — what ties of love and memory it would sunder to leave it. Then, too, I am afraid, if the charm of constrained activity were broken, I should sink down. But the chances are nine to ten that I must go, and that speedily. For five weeks my throat has been growing steadily and desperately bad. My general health, on the other hand, is unusually good, which makes it more discouraging. One Sunday I preached but half a day, and *you* know I should not have stopped for a small reason. You know I have always felt, that, if I broke down again, it was better for me and for the people that I should go. Am

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I not between too fires? But do not think I am distressed, or even anxious. The *Son of Man* is with me, and the Infinite *Father*. I can go in peace where I am led."

May 29. — "I have had many thoughts, or rather a daily recurring thought, of writing you, from the moment I heard of your new joy and ——'s safety. It awoke in me more of personal feeling than I am wont to experience; for I have been sensible of late of a paralysis of the heart, and at present dare not say that I love any living being. And could I not remember how my heart, so calm and still now, had leaped in the ecstasy of a paradise morning, in the promised fulfilment of a hope so strangely prominent and abiding with me for years, and how, when that new song was put into it, its utterance was, 'O God, I thank thee, that, once and for all eternity, thou hast made me a father'?

"It is inevitable that my thoughts should thus revert to myself, and I thank you that I feel the liberty to give them this free utterance. Be assured my sympathy in your gladness is none the less, perhaps all the greater, that it has called up so vividly my own sorrow. Nor until this moment has any thought of contrast crossed my mind. And it comes now with no painful or repining feeling. For night is beautiful as day, and the cloud, no less than the sunbeam, comes laden with a blessing.

"I would gladly speak of myself, for scarcely from my deepest life do I utter a word to any man. But I am become a fathomless mystery to my own eye. To others I am a perfect mirror; and my own introspective glance can discern scarcely more than the landscape

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that surrounds me, though in the back-ground dim shadows dance; and under my feet I hear faint murmuring echoes, and music soothingly solemn, — sometimes of glad melody, and then dying away in a plaintive wail of infinite sadness. But I am in such a whirl of constant and laborious activity, that it is only for a brief moment now and then that I am permitted to enter this sacred sanctuary. For the most part, I live a purely *unselfish* life. There is no *self*. I am a mirror, and God holds me in his hand as he walks, and I am gladly conscious of the universe of beauty that is thus reflected back upon itself. I know of nothing that would be so pleasant, and I think so beneficial, as to have you come and spend some days with me. We will ride and walk over our beautiful hills, and through the quiet woods; and as Elisha put his eyes upon the child's eyes, and his hands upon the child's hands, so you shall bring me back to life and consciousness again. But wherefore? for is not consciousness susceptibility of suffering? Only that the fact of speaking as I have seems to show that the time for such return has come. I have no desire to hasten or to postpone it, but am sensible of an uneasy and almost dissatisfied feeling; and a sense of a destiny unfulfilled, and indistinct glimpses of a new ideal that is yet to shape itself, seem to show that there is a future in this life for which I am to gird myself, though I have desired with a passionate longing that it might not be so.

"Who wrote that article on Immortality in the Examiner? It struck me peculiarly, perhaps from my state of mind. But there was one thought with which I

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would have concluded, — the greatest of all thoughts, — the *consciousness* of immortality, the realization that so comes home to the soul at times, 'I am not *to be*, but *I am*, immortal.' In the light of this thought, the most beautiful thing in the universe is Duty, and the next most beautiful is Death. Time becomes an eternity, of which man rises to be a king and a god; and farther off, in a dim glory, is another eternity, in which we are enfolded in the arms of an infinite love."

June 25. — "Seriously, if you will let me say so, while I do most heartily respect and admire your *mode*, I can't help thinking that you are doing just what I ought, and I just what you ought. It is I who want 'solidity and depth,' while you, perhaps, need more surface. But *logic*, — I have more natural love of it than you give me credit for, I dare say. But what can it do? Its sole office seems to me to account to the soul for itself. Of all things in the world, reasoning is the most unreasonable. Your perfect system of things is a dream more visionary than *I* dare cherish. Is not all life a giving up of old plans and laying out of new, to be themselves in turn relinquished by the time the foundations are laid? Logic refutes itself in every corner. There is n't a single statement or principle that does not become an absurdity when carried out. System is only an artificial chaos in place of a natural one, and science itself is one of those 'exquisite ironies of language,' whose exoteric significance indeed is knowledge, but which, exoterically, can only mean the knowledge of one's utter ignorance. I have no doubt, that, in all these things, what does us good is the attempt, rather

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than the approximation. Your hope of working some day with your 'eyes open' is my utter despair. The social problem is awful, but not more so than a hundred others. The way to shake off the incubus of one is to find another, I take it. . . . . .

"I lose at times the faith that I am of the least consequence or consideration to any one, and few, perhaps, can bear that feeling so ill as I. I live a helter-skelter sort of life, that keeps me busy, and almost flurried, and yet seems to accomplish little and leave the most undone. Yesterday, for example, I wrote two letters, made three calls, and read children's books for the library, which took up the morning. In the afternoon, rode thirteen miles to call on sick people, and visited four families, till supper. Evening, made one call, and read library books. You must not think I make unnecessary calls, either. To do my best, I can scarcely visit the sick, infirm, and bereaved. A good many families I have never called upon. So I live on, in this run-amuck sort of life, of which little account can be given, and which I have no time to systematize. I am not very well, and almost every day for three months the problem has come up, whether I ought not to go away from here, half a man as I am, physically and intellectually, for the people's good and my own. I should almost rejoice at some indication of failure or unpopularity, as opening the way of escape. But to leave now would be to desert duty; and indeed, if I were strong enough, I would not exchange the place for any in Christendom.

"I have been thinking much of Peace lately, and

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have taken very strong ground in a sermon against all war. Still, I am not insensible of the difficulties attending the position, but for the present stick there with some pertinacity. Colonization, too, has interested me more than ever, (I don't mean Brook Farm, but Liberia,) while I have been giving some heed to Free Trade, in which an interest was accidentally called up. Let us know what you think of these things, as also what is your opinion of such a course of thought as all that I have said indicates. You can't think worse of it, for all purposes of healthy personal growth, than I do.

"As for my Church movement, we have meetings which are well attended, (from thirty-five to eighty,) and rather increase in interest. I have got a change in the conditions of admission, have appointed a committee, and got a standing fund for benevolent action, and have already distinctly declared the communion free. In one respect, my hopes have been, thus far, but poorly realized, to wit: in the accessions made to the Church. Still, I am hopeful in this. As for the Sunday School, I hope you did not mean to express any doubts of its value or promise. If you did, come up here and we will resolve them. We have weekly teachers' meetings, attended by from thirty to forty, and a School of upwards of three hundred and fifty, including teachers and adult classes. About thirty young men from eighteen to twenty-five. To be sure, I do not estimate our success in this way; but I am so fully satisfied of the great capabilities of the Sunday School system, that I have had serious thoughts of proposing to the people to come to church in the morning,

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and all stop to Sunday School, and then have a long intermission, and a second service at half-past five. I have long been persuaded that the world is to be *millenniumized* by making people talk."

July 21. — "You know I told you that the faith which, in early life, we take upon trust and authority, we come to doubt and question afterwards. We ask ourselves why we believe this and that, and have no reason to give. So we go back and start anew, feeling our way step by step. We answer doubt after doubt, and settle principle after principle, and so by and by we work our way back to our childhood's faith again; — not that we believe on the same grounds, but because we have found a reason for belief. And this, which is at first a faith of reasoning, becomes again a faith of trust. We believed at first tremblingly, as it were; and continually our doubts were coming up, and we had to answer them over and over again. But at length we have vanquished them so often that they have ceased to come; and though we know how to meet them if they should, yet we scarcely remember that we ever had any doubts. This is what I mean by filial faith; at least, this is part of it. You will understand now, perhaps, why I so continually cautioned you against taking anything upon trust, or supposing that I could do anything more for you than put you in the way to resolve your doubts; because, if you had received anything on my authority, then your fabric of belief would some time give way, and, when you thought you had built a firm foundation to stand upon, you would find it giving way under your feet, and be obliged to go clear back and lay the corner-stone anew.

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I do not think this will ever befall you, but you must not despair if it should; only the second building is harder than the first, and it is better to go on so slow and sure that there will be no danger of falling back. Then, again, if your faith in goodness rests on man, it will sometimes waver; for human goodness is a poor thing, after all, — very poor.

"You must believe in truth not from logic, in goodness not from man; but the source of belief must be in God. You know the Samaritans said, 'Now we believe, not because of the saying of the woman, but we have seen and heard him ourselves.'

"I saw on Sunday a beautiful arch of stone, built with great art, over the entrance to the cemetery at Salem. It fell once, because it had not been well constructed; but now it stands firm, a mere loose pile of stones, without support, or iron bolts, or cement, held together by God's law of gravitation. The woodbine and the ivy have grown up all over it, and will soon hide every vestige of man's art from the eye. So should we build the structure of a living faith in our heart; and by and by it shall have stood so long and be so natural and entire, so overgrown with all the green, springing beauty and virtue and gladness of life, that we shall forget how every stone was laid one upon another with slow and patient toil; and if we ask how came it so with us, the first answer that should come, spontaneous and unbidden, would be, 'God made it so.'

"This is what I mean by a *natural faith* that never questions, — a *childlike faith* that takes God's word and asks no more."

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Dorchester, August 21. — "You speak with regret of the severing of our thread of intercourse. Have you not learned, long ago, that to my 'life, doings, and sayings' there is no thread? They are but as so many flying ends, — scattered, ravelling, confused, and worthless. I have neither done, attempted, nor projected anything the last few months. Now, these last two nights, while God and Death and I sat watching my poor suffering sister, I have felt more and lived more. Sometimes, when we think we can do and bear no longer, God shows us how we can both bear longer and more, and makes us strong again by adding to our burden. Selfish and petulant, Moses says, 'Send by whom thou wilt send, O Lord.' How often do we thus shrink from life's mission, so different from our choice, so at variance with *our* conviction of what is fitting! We don't believe we can perform it, even by and with God's help. But we can.

"I have more and more faith in the Sunday School. Ours is going on beautifully, — no thanks to me. I think we *must have* adult classes. Next winter, I mean to have an adult Sunday School specifically. Ordinarily, we have had no school in winter. Last year, there were a few voluntary adult classes, numbering about seventy-five, and they went on admirably.

"I am to be better as soon as it grows cool, and then I shall work, I trust. Every day, these six months, I have been thinking about giving up. But I shall do no such thing. If I am well, I have neither the right nor the motive; if sick, I lack the energy for such a step. And though it would seem so beautiful to get time to

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recruit, physically and intellectually, yet is n't this idea of putting one's self in a favorable position for self-culture an absurdity and a humbug, no less than a sinful, devil-invented excuse for shirking duty?

"How impossible it is for you to know the utter desolation of spirit that sometimes comes over me with that word *Home!* But my little boy begins to pull at my heart, though I have strangely held back, resolved to have no tie to life. It is dreadful to feel as if God had plucked you up like a weed, and thrown you away. These are not such words as I would fain utter to your brotherly ear, — so kind to listen that it makes me wonder. But, God helping, you shall see me strong again for life's labor, and not shrinking from its wisely-appointed mission, but girded as a pilgrim, ready to say, 'Here am I, Lord, send me.' God bless you and yours!"

October 5. — "Through the summer, I was fairly dried up with the heat. The streams of thought were thin and small as knitting-needles, and the wheels of my intellectual factory were all still and motionless as the sphinx, — I mean, of course, the sphinx statue. I could no more *make* a sermon than a tree. Now Cæsar is himself again; and though the streams are still low, the wheels will turn, and make fabrics 'after their kind.'

"I believe this is the blessedest parish in the world for an inefficient man. It is so large and strong, it *goes alone.* The Sunday School has got gloriously through the season. Teachers' meetings well attended and sustained, — people come to church and listen splendidly; and the best of it is, that I can't claim the least credit for it. I do flatter myself, that it is of some importance,

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that, nominally, they should have a minister; but the work does itself.

"..... I was riding into Boston in the omnibus, and fell into conversation with a friend of mine about wealth. I came out pretty strong on mammon-worship, and the selfish and prodigal luxury of wealth. By and by a man got out who had sat near me, and I inquired his name. 'That is Mr. ——,' said my friend; 'just one of those men you were berating, and doubtless thought you were uttering strange doctrines.' The next day, I met him again. 'I rode out,' said he, 'with Mr. —— last night, and he inquired, the first thing, who you were. "He is a little cracked in his intellect, is n't he? I never heard such views advanced in my life. It is idle to say a man has no right to spend his money as he pleases. To carry out such notions as his," continued he, "would be to level all to one grade, and reduce society to chaos or a savage state." Why,' says my friend, 'I think you misunderstood him, if you think so. As to his being cracked in intellect, when I remember that Galileo and Columbus, and a host of such men, were so charged in their day, and St. Paul was thought insane by some, it becomes a serious question, when one differs from me, whether it is he or I that is cracked.' Soon after, I met a very intelligent and excellent lady, who lives in a small country town, and, in the course of some conversation with her, she said, 'It is one of the hardest things in the world for me to define the limits of duty. For instance, our neighbours are all poor, and we have always done without carpets and a good many such things, because we did not want to be suspected of setting our-

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selves up above them, and because we would not have our example encourage them in expenses they are not able to incur. They do without such things contentedly, when they find that we do.'

"But to return. Nothing so impedes the spread of Christianity as these two things: that constancy of Labor, that takes all a man's time and thoughts, and makes him the merest machine, merely to get money; and that selfish love of Ease, that reckless and prodigal Indulgence, after a man has got wealth. The first kills out the intellect, and the last petrifies the heart of a man. It is the minister's office to rebuke both; and if he lends countenance to the last, how can he with any consistency utter his word against the former? I might go on to show how the minister stands as a connecting link between these two divided classes, and it is his province to labor to bring them up side by side on the broad level of Christian brotherhood. . . . . .

"It seems to me he should say, by word and example, 'These are not the legitimate uses of money.' It seems to me, that, with a somewhat stern simplicity of living, he should discountenance these tendencies of the times. At least, he should protect himself from the charge of aristocracy, and the love of wealth and ease. I know that an extreme here would fail of its designed influence, and I confess I should n't know where to draw the line for myself, still less for another. But with my radical tendencies, you need n't be surprised to hear that I have taken as literal duty the injunction not to lay up treasures on earth, (thus far from necessity as well as principle,) have forsworn carpets, and changed a very

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nice portrait-frame my conscience reproaches me for buying last month, to one of plain painted pine; and made my house (to quote Emerson again) 'a temple of the Furies of Lacedæmon, formidable and holy to all, which none but a Spartan may enter, or so much as behold.'"

December 2, 1847. — "As to the general course which you propose, I have not a word to say about it, except this, that a topic of which you do not choose to speak is not an 'interdicted' one; and still I should say for myself, that I would preach nowhere, where by tacit understanding any subject was 'interdicted,' by stipulation or outward pressure, expressed or implied. Your judgment of what is wisest and best is quite another thing from being bound by others' judgment of what is right or agreeable to them.

"Certainly I have not, any more than you, great sympathy with N. E. Abolitionism. Still, it has its mission to perform, — to wit, the awakening of the community to a sense of the evils of slavery. For it is a fact lamentably true, that there are many here at the North, who are not alive to the fact that it is either an evil or a sin, — who care nothing about it. When the moral sense of the North is as decided and strong on this subject as it is in England, its influence must be powerfully felt. The Liberty party, too, is coming to be respected as a political power. The South will be more and more alarmed, — more and more indignant, it may be; but she will discuss and agitate the subject, and the moment discussion begins, then the end is plainly to be seen: every conscientious man will be convinced of the

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sin, every clear-sighted man will see the inexpediency, of slavery. As to local prejudice, and party acrimony, and sectional hatred, that is the veriest humbug. What is the North? or the anti-slavery party? A mere phantom of imagination, an abstract conception, that (except in the persons of certain leaders) nobody can make concrete. In the beginning of the temperance movement, it was a 'sectarian thing,' — a bitter and cruel persecution of the poor drunkard. What has become of all that outcry now? The drunkard says it no longer. So, let the South become interested in Abolitionism, and she will thank the most rabid for helping to open her eyes. The sinner converted under Orthodoxy loved the man who painted his sin so darkly, and threatened him with awful and endless damnation if he did not forsake it. Say what you will about extravagance, fanaticism, severity of judgment, exaggerated statement, and tyranny of opinion, the world has always been reformed in this way and by these means; and, for aught I know, she always will require them.

"I have little faith in the measures, and still less sympathy with the spirit, of Abolitionism. What, then, shall I do, seeing that so much moral life and true feeling in the community runs into that channel? Shall I throw cold water on it? That were to injure my own influence, — to deaden the moral sense now regnant, and to be identified with the opponents of the whole reform. I will not absolutely identify myself with the party. I will even say that reforms are not the whole of Christianity, and may be conducted in an unchristian spirit; but I will be cautious how I complain even of the men

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engaged in this reform. Do not say I wrong the spirit of Christianity by silent consent to such tremendous severity of judgment. I do not doubt that many a slaveholder is a better and truer man than myself; but that ought not to lead me to lower my standard of Christian obligation. For his own sake, though he were ten times a Paul, I will say, In the light of Christianity slave-holding is a monstrous crime against God and man. If there are excuses, qualifications, exceptions, I do not feel bound to make them. Still, so far as I am concerned, I would speak of the sin itself, not of the sinner.

"..... These are only transient phases of a great movement, which will soon pass away. Already old-organization assumes a higher moral tone, and is much less rabid than it was. But the movement will go on. I cannot stop it. God forbid I should hinder or oppose it. I will rather share in it, and go with it as far as I possibly can, — for my own sake, lest it should crush me, — for its sake, that my more moderate word may be as a rain-drop, now and then, to extinguish the burning grass-blade its lightnings have set on fire. It is n't for you or me to do the dirty work, or fight the bloody battle; but it must be done and fought. A million of Melancthons would not have brought about the Reformation. That first company of the Apostles had been incomplete without the Boanerges; and John must preach repentance before Jesus can proclaim the kingdom of heaven.

"I am not startled at the idea of immediate, unconditional emancipation. It would probably take place

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in one State at a time; why would it be less practicable than in the British West Indies? At any rate, the way will certainly appear when there is a disposition to find it."

This long transcript of his reflections and mental habits has thus been concluded, with the account of himself with which he prefaces his autumn work, and another, of a year's later date, which seems to belong to the same connection. These very nearly complete the record he has left of what was peculiar or strongly personal in his plans of labor, in his professional views, or in his experience. The most full account of the period that succeeded will be gathered from those passages of his discourses (mostly belonging to that year) which are given in another part of this volume. A long space will therefore intervene in these memoirs, during which he was slowly maturing the fruits of his brief but crowded experience. With the exception of ill-health and mental depression at intervals, he was henceforth becoming able to receive a more cheerful view of life, and the hope of a fresh field of healthy activity and usefulness.

Meanwhile, busied with professional care, and shrinking, as it were, from the free communication

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which he had so warmly welcomed and responded to in the first season of his trial, he felt more strongly the loneliness of spirit to which this had condemned him. The weight of care pressed more heavily, and was sustained with a less elastic mind. Something almost stern and ascetic in his idea of the ethics of his profession has been already indicated, very different from the cheerful, buoyant sentiment, in which the æsthetic was largely mingled with the practical, that marked the first period of his course. In part, this change of feeling was deepened, in part worn away, by time. He says of himself, at a later date, "I have grown very old these three years. Trying experience and isolation from sympathy have made me brooding and anxious, habitually sad, and habitually unconfiding and reserved. Crowding labor and over-work have left me no time to replenish, — cramped and bound and smoke-dried me. I have lost the genial vivacity and the fresh flow of spontaneous and living thought, — whatever of it I once had. I expect and hope for little. I am a severe judge, yet, after all, am free to confess that I judge none so severely as myself. Yet still I do suspect there is a heart left; sometimes, *agnosce veteris vestigia flammæ*. Sometimes over the hori-

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zon of my winter night flashes up an auroral redness, that I fancy is the glowing morning of spring thought; but that soon seems to pass away, the fitful glare of meteoric or electric flame, cold and transient." The return of hope, and the restored faculty of enjoyment, appear in the description of his first visit to the valley of the Connecticut, in the summer of 1847, with the chastened sadness of the retrospect that follows it : —

" The way was charming, and, for about ten miles, along the banks of Miller's river, perfectly enchanting. The road winds between the river and a high hill, running a long distance through thick woods, where the delicate white flowers of the white-wood (not unlike a sweetbrier rose in shape and size, and growing six to ten feet high) mingle with the rich pink of the wild honey-suckle, with which the air is fragrant. But O, the valley of the Connecticut ! — you never saw, and cannot conceive, anything like it. The great, still, sober river, moving on its calm, beneficent course, like some noble and divine soul through life, — the high hills that swell up, range after range, in the distance, — the acres upon acres that make that fertile valley, laid out in square plots, and separated by cart-paths, but nowhere fenced, — the fringe of shrubbery that adorns its banks without concealing its beauty, (like a fair face seen through a green veil,) — all this passes description. What with this, and the fact that I saw it for the first time, in

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the very freshness of spring, — what with the beauty and hospitable welcome of a kind and free country farmer's home, — what with the new spring buds of hope and promise starting in the wintry heart, — these four days were such a paradise as it never seemed that earth could bring again to me, and have left a picture in my mind, and a host of memories in my soul, fresh and bright and fragrant as Eden itself."

December 28, 1847. — "It is startling and strange, as one sits down to think of friends, and count over their names one by one, to mark how, year by year, it seems as if the number grew smaller and smaller, of those toward whom you feel a near, and warm, and trusting affection. Some are parted from us by that veil, through which, thin as it is, our mortal eyes may not, and our spiritual vision is not yet pure enough to look; some have gone away from us, and are lost in the inextinguishable mass of the world's swelling tide, that ebbs and flows around us, so indifferent, and so chill, that very often we forget that it is made up of hearts like our own; some we ourselves have outgrown; and toward some we have suffered our affection to grow cold and die out, and now, if we would gladly rekindle it, we know not how. And then, too, it is common experience, though it ought not to be, that, as one grows older, he is less ready to form new attachments; and what with scanty opportunities of intercourse with a particular individual, and what with his diminished facility of affection, and perhaps an increased distrust and reserve, he really does form fewer and fewer real friendships year by year. I have felt this in my own experience, not so

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much, perhaps, from advance in life's journey, as that the events these few years have brought have made me more reserved, and shut me out from others. I have been thinking much of this lately, and have felt more and more inclined to fall back upon old friends, and to renew intercourse with some from whom duties at home, and accidental circumstances, have kept me more separated than I should have chosen, or it was well for me to be. And so I have been more drawn towards Dorchester of late than for a long time: the old home memories have been reviving within me, and the faces of old friends have had a more prominent place in my thoughts.

"I have been conscious of this feeling a great many times during the last few months. And that made me feel very deeply, the other day, the assurance of continued interest, and kind remembrance, implied in your present. I was touched with the thoughtful kindness that remembered me across the waters. And then such a feeling of your long and valued friendship came up in my heart, that it seemed to shoot a bridge over the gulf of a three years' absence, and a throng of past memories rushed into my thoughts that I could hardly repress, and ought not to have tried. If I had been true to my own feeling, I should have put away the picture, and sat down, and looked at the picture of the Past.

"These three years have been longer than all my life before. Their recollections have crowded the thought of that previous life out of my mind. But more and more the earlier days come back. If your experience is like mine, you have found life made up more of the memory of the past, and the hope of the future, than

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the enjoyment of the present moment. Yet I can hardly think it was meant to be so. It seems to me we ought to strive to live as much as is possible in the present, — for the duty and the action that always put in a claim for *now*. Still I thank God, whose mercy has given to man this threefold life of memory, of action, and of anticipation. For often, in the weakness and inability of the present, we turn our feet backward, and with thankful tears retrace the life of the past. We pause to repose in our weariness on the green and sunny slopes of childhood; we comfort our fainting spirits with memories, which are not the less dear and precious because they are sad. And so there are times when we lean, when we must lean, on the future, — when, in conscious weakness or despondency of spirit, our comfort is, that there is a to-morrow after to-day; and we turn away from the present, and raise our eyes to the God and the heaven above us.

"It could not but be, that, isolated from real sympathy and companionship, I have lived, in these last two years, very much in the past, — more than was right or well, perhaps, and yet I am not sure. Now, I am looking forward to the future, — not with great confidence or high expectation, but with more of hope than I thought I should ever have in life again.

"But I trust, if I am permitted to have a home again, I shall use its privileges more faithfully, and less selfishly, — shall build up in it a divine life, and sanctify it as a school of teaching for the great Home to which we look. And so, to speak truly, I do anticipate more than I have ever anticipated, only in a different way."

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Another indication of the more firm and hopeful spirit with which he looked forward to the next year's duties, is found in the discourse he preached on the third and last anniversary of his settlement. As a summing up of the past, and anticipation of the future, this seems the fittest place to insert a few passages from it.

"When I was settled as your preacher, I determined to begin at once by uttering without reserve whatever seemed to me the truth. I determined also to confine myself to no narrow range of topics, but to speak on whatever subject seemed to me important or useful. To my mind, that alone is Christian preaching, — above all, useful preaching, — which applies Christianity to the thoughts, opinions, and practices of the present day. I have had no temptation to keep anything back. I am inclined to think that the temptation has been the rather to abuse the freedom so willingly granted. If I have seemed to any of you to be severe in judgment, or dogmatic in opinion, or one-sided and narrow in my range of subjects, you have failed in your duty to me, as well as in the maintenance of your own rights, not to reprove me for it.

"Next, the other great means of ministerial influence, parochial visiting, — a subject which has cost me more labor, more anxiety, and more regret, than anything connected with my public duties. I am perfectly willing to say, that I have not, in this part of my duty, fulfilled my own intention or expectations; and I

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feel that many of you are warranted in complaining that your minister is a stranger. If I have seemed negligent of anybody, it was accidental, and not of design. I will not plead for indulgence, because I have received it; but I will express my hope of doing more in this respect in the future.

"And now, in reviewing these three years, I confess, I cannot count up any very tangible results of my ministry. I have preached much on the institutions of Christianity, but our Church has received few accessions; and the ordinances of baptism and communion are as much neglected, — perhaps increasingly so. I have endeavoured to urge you to begin, and to live, a spiritual life; but very few have spoken to me of spiritual purposes and aims, hopes, fears, doubts, or struggles. Sometimes, in hours of desponding, I would have given much to have had, from a single soul, the expression of a confiding sympathy, or the assurance that some word of mine had been to it the germ of a diviner life, or the means of quickening influence. It is not possible that I should look back on my three years' ministry, without finding many things to regret, many duties neglected, errors of inexperience, mistakes of judgment, follies and sins that bring a double penalty, weakening my influence while they retard my own onward progress. I know, too, that, very often, the opportunity of salutary counsel has been lost; very often the word of sympathy, that I would gladly have spoken, has been withheld, because I knew not how to say it; very often I have failed through neglect or indolence to minister comfort to the sick, or to cheer the aged with friendly

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words. Think you, the minister's conscience does not count up all these things, — a longer and darker array than all the gossip or the scandal of a parish could bring, the true and the false together?

"But, if I have not done all you might have expected, yet you have excused many things, have borne many deficiencies patiently. If you have not expressed much in words of sympathy and kind feeling, you have given satisfactory evidence that you felt it. If I have come to be personally intimate with few, I stand on pleasant terms with all, and have received nothing but kindness and courtesy from every one with whom I have had intercourse. If I have brought but few to adopt my opinions, I have learned how kindly and tolerantly they are listened to by those who dissent from them. I feel that I am gaining a position among you, and coming to stand nearer to you. You have summered me and wintered me; and such as I am, you know me, for better or worse.

"And I will say, that I am looking forward on my future prospects of usefulness with more hope than at any preceding period since I came among you. The first popularity of a young preacher is a dangerous and deceitful thing, variable and treacherous as the wind: no man knows whence it cometh or whither it goeth. I have outlived that dangerous period, and still have reason to believe, that, in as great a degree as is ordinarily to be expected, my services are satisfactory to you. I place a reliance upon the fact now, which ought never to be placed on any sudden breeze of popular applause. There are other things to make the first three years of

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a minister's life peculiarly trying, — his own inexperience; the tremendous pressure of labor, new and arduous; the crushing demand upon his intellectual resources. I believe that I have passed the most laborious and trying period of life. Henceforward, I can better meet the demand which custom has inured one to, and shall be able to perform the same amount of labor with more ease.

"And hardly, in the common course of Providence, may the next three years be expected to bring experiences so trying, or circumstances so unfavorable. With firmer health, I trust to do more; with less to make me anxious and desponding, I can labor more successfully. You are less likely to misunderstand my preaching, or my character. I am looking forward, then, to-day, with much hope; with expectations of greater success and usefulness in the future; with larger plans of action, and resolutions of greater diligence and fidelity. I have, during the past year, been much more away than my own choice, or my convictions of a minister's duty, would warrant. Partly, I have found this necessary for my health, and partly it was to be attributed to the fact that all my relations of earlier affection and of kindred lay elsewhere. In the future, I hope and mean to dwell more among my own people. I trust to do much more in the coming year, in the way of parochial visiting, — more in the course of education, and in behalf of our schools; and do confidently expect to labor more efficiently, to accomplish more and better things, than in the past. You have borne with the first years of greenness and inexperience: you have a right to reap, and to ex-

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pect the riper fruits. With thankfulness for the past, and with hope for the future, I would dedicate to you, this day, all that God gives me, hereafter, ability to do."

Some extracts from a private letter complete the record of the hopes and feelings of this season. In particular, and owing to the circumstances under which he had given religious guidance and counsel to inquiring minds of less experience than his, and of an active, questioning sort, the alternative of radical and conservative tendencies seems to have come before him in a new form, and accounts for the somewhat exaggerated statement of the succeeding passage.

January 29, 1848. — "I cannot but feel the justice of all you say; but consider, that the public standard of rectitude is one fixed by arbitrary decision, and preserved by the tyranny of moral indignation. Is there any help for this? Must not one say, *This is right in God's name*, and get the majority to shout it, and to put down by force of shouting the dissenting voices? It is perfectly true, that this is n't resting the public morality on the internal convictions, and the satisfied reason of individuals; but is n't the world to be ruled this good while to come from without? It may not be a sin *per se* to drink a glass of wine, but it were heresy to say so, and a wrong to society too; so I am thankful that to me it is a sin *per se*. Where would the temperance movement have been, without the dictation of authority,

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the tyranny of public odium, and the penalties of legislative enactment, that have helped it on? You will think me a downright heathen, — say so, an you will, — but I have lost my faith in the public intelligence and the public virtue. I believe more and more in machineries, — institutions, — despotisms. I am growing conservative, and almost misanthropic, — turning round the first corner of old age, when prejudices stiffen, and opinions fix themselves, and the sidelong course turns the eyes backward more and more. I am sick of liberty and individualism, — should like in my modesty to dictate laws to the world, and enforce them, — am disposed to think that the world *is* a strange place, the worst place I was ever in.

Sunday Night. — "I find among the difficulties of preaching these two: First, a reluctance to dogmatize, and, second, a wish to preserve the authority and influence of truth. Sometimes, in a positive statement, one is conscious that his own faith is not so unquestioning as his assertion, or else he feels that the assertion is not true without qualification and exceptions. On the other hand, if he suggests the doubt, or inserts the limitation, many minds will take it as an entire negation. What is the solution of the difficulty?

"It seems sad that all around us is so changing. I am too much impressed with it. I have too little confidence in the future. Sometimes I can hardly throw off the feeling that my own life is going to be very brief. It is sad only in this point of view, to think of its being so, that the work of life is not done, nor its aims realized. I would fain do more, and live better. And so,

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ordinarily, I really trust, anticipate. . . . . But I was going to say how strong with me, of late, had been the impulse to cling to the friends that are left me, and how I have determined, these months past, to keep up my relations of sympathy and intercourse with all to whom I stand near now. For I woke up, one day, to the fact that I was almost alone in the world, — for real communion and hearty affection, isolated and desolate, almost. And so your words could not have come to me more seasonably and welcome. I take them thankfully, in all their exaggeration of my merits, and to all their tenderness of trust and fraternity my heart answers back, 'God love and bless you!'"

His marriage (to Miss Phila A. Field) took place February 21, 1848. "Shall I build again," he says, "the sacred walls of home, whose sudden fall had left me surrounded with a heap of ruin? Will the old Eden of love and thought and hope come back again? I feel as if it might. I need not say I am happy, — happier than I ever trusted or dared hope to be again." This new light of joy is "his rose of dawn, his star of night, the spring sun smiling over the wintry snow, and lighting it up with beauty." And, blended as it was with all his thought and wish and expectation of longer and better cause of duty, it shed a promise on this opening season, as if he had a right to look forward now to the

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complete fulfilment of a hope so long deferred, — "usefulness and a happy home."

But the tone of his system seems to have been permanently depressed; and the effort he made to meet the pledge given in his discourse at the opening of the year was a vain struggle against physical causes too powerful for him to control. At the same time, too, he was not free from mental embarrassment and dissatisfaction. The great question, as to the nature and grounds of authority in religious belief, opened more and more deeply before his mind; and the last letter of his, expressing strong interest in any point of intellectual belief, contains the earnest statement of this, with the hope that others would give the satisfactory answer which he found it so difficult to give for himself. This point of intellectual or speculative dissatisfaction may help account, perhaps, for the morbid and exaggerated tone which may have been remarked in much of what he said during these last few months. True to the sentiment of duty "as the sea's tidal swell to the sovereign moon," this conflict of feelings and sympathies and duties, together with increasing bodily ill-health, would do much to derange the harmony of his mind, even while his heart went so

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fondly back to its old affections, and was loyal as ever to its early aspiration.

May 10, 1848.—"In the mystic whirl of life, I am once again brought side by side with you. Trifles light as air rule us, and my little boy, in his simple wonder, is a daily reminder of you. I remember a peculiar tone and manner in which, long ago, you used to ejaculate, 'Why!' Insensibly I caught it, and now Willie, whose organ of imitation is large, comes out every now and then with a 'Why!' exactly in your way. And whenever he does, it carries me back to Divinity Hall, whose recollections grow dearer as its scenes recede into the background of memory; and away to you, not at W——, but wherever in the spiritual world you happen to be. Probably, we are very seldom where we are; and I, of late, though seeming to be here in Leominster, have been a very Wandering Jew,—a Noah's dove, let loose in uneasy, and, as yet, unavailing search of the olive-branch.

"I want time to settle a multitude of questions, that lie so deep as to render most things that I say in my preaching half a matter of doubt. I am in a transition stage, and, for the present, held in solution. Meanwhile, my preaching grows strongly conservative, partly because I have learned to dread for myself the cutting loose from old moorings, and partly from the feeling that negations are very poor food. Sincere idolatry is better than bare, cold iconoclasm. But, pray, are you never oppressed with the shame and uneasiness that come of doing what is not true to your own feeling

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and conviction? It is a fearful problem to me, how I am to do my work *for others*, and keep clear of sham and cant.

"Intellectually, my position is equally unsatisfactory. I have gone on these three years in ruinous mental habits, — my time frittered, my mind enervated, through the occupation of little things. My preaching has not lost power, that I know of, over others; yet it seems to me it must, for I am sensible of its growing puerile and stale. The result of my life is bad habits of study, loss of memory, of force of thought, and conversational power. I know I am capable of better things, — that I have in me a higher ministry. I am galled, fretted, unhappy. Still, I don't know how to do anything for myself. 'The field that has fed its owner's guests during the summer will yield but scanty returns in harvest time.' This retribution of wasted resources is already begun, and growing worse, and harder to bear, every day. Then, both mentally and physically, I am suffering the results of high-pressure work. The inspiration which nature did not give, I have sought to supply from artificial sources. Fed from false fires, its fitful flash is going out in smoke, as devil's gold, kept over night, turns to sulphur in the morning. I suffer, as Prometheus did, pangs of the liver for stealing the fire of the gods, but have not his compensation, — the thought that I have made *a man*. I need not say, — you will have premised it long ago, — that I am nervous, dyspeptic, blue. I have made up my mind to write no more sermons after next Sunday, till I am better, and, if I can't meet and master the demons, to ask a dismission the first of July."

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I have preferred to present the whole of this painful and sensitive self-accusation, so as to do entire justice to the state of mind in which he felt himself, at last, forced to renounce the position he had held so long, and through so heavy trial. In his moral judgments he had always included the neglect and violation of physical laws; and his continued and increasing ill-health he attributed far more to his own fault than any candid judge will allow. His habits were, in general, simple, and not in defiance of the laws of the system, except in case of exposure and over-work. The use of tea was the only custom in this regard with which he reproached himself, and that not of the more deleterious kinds. This custom he had deliberately resumed, after a painful effort to discontinue it, with the conviction (right or not) that it was his duty not to refuse the support which he seemed absolutely to need. To show the sort of compulsion that sometimes drove him to over-action and excitement of the brain, may be mentioned an instance, when, after a week's very irritating and harassing care, his second sermon being nearly finished at eight on Saturday evening, a man came to announce that a funeral service would be held in the church next day; and the whole labor

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of the writing must be done over again. A cool and dispassionate judgment will, no doubt, censure the kindling of any "artificial fire"; but where there is consciousness of work to be done, and the painful sense of a system inadequate to meet it, the stronger conscience will crowd the weaker out of sight. This is not meant as an apology for any habit that permanently depresses the bodily and nervous system, but as a vindication of one whose *first* thought of duty (exacted by the strict standard of his own and the public judgment) is so paramount and imperative, that he "gives his body to be buried," slowly, by the artificial fire his need has kindled, while yet his *other* conscience is shrinking and protesting before it all the while.

The short remainder of the story is told in the annexed series of extracts: —

June 13. — "My present impression is, that I shall ask a dismission. My plan is, to go to Dorchester, and spend a few months in study and work, with such transient preaching as I can find; then, after this lay-by of from six months to a year, to find a quiet and not too laborious place. Convinced as I am that this is best for me, I am, after all, a little doubtful if I have resolution enough to carry it out. The obvious advantages I need not sum up. If I should stay, the probability is, that

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I shall lose the best years of life, and cut short my period of labor, without accomplishing my object after all. I shall be obliged to leave, at last, worn out in body, exhausted and stultified in mental resources and power. But, — this is *home* to me, and I have no other; endeared by all sorts of local associations, and sacred memories, and personal attachments. Then, I know the freshness of interest in a place and people can never be quite such again, though the attachment might, in time, become equally strong; and I hate the principle of frequent rupture, so common and so disastrous both to minister and people. Finally, and chief, I will say, in all sincerity, that, feeble and unsatisfactory as my labors are here, I cannot now put my eye upon the available man who would do more or better, on the whole. I will not leave my people to scatter as sheep having no shepherd. I am bound to stay by them till they find somebody to fill my place. By that time, the autumn will have come, and, renewed by comparative rest and cooler weather, I should have strength to work through another winter. You see how vacillating and bothered I am. Yet my judgment is clear that I ought to go."

June 15. — "You have several impressions that are false, and that I wish to contradict. First, that I am a martyr to my own devoted labors. If it were so, I should be content to die, though I should not glory in what would still be a folly and a sin. I am simply the culprit of nature, suffering the penalty of violated laws. It is n't that I have done so much, or worked so self-forgetfully, Heaven knows. I cannot lay that flattering

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unction to my soul. I have worked on high-pressure, excessively and unreasonably sometimes, to make up for indolence and neglect at other times. Please say to all inquiring friends, that I am neither a saint nor a martyr, but simply a weak and sinful dyspeptic. Then, as to my people, a more generous, liberal, considerate, patient, forbearing, yea, long-suffering parish, Christendom does n't hold. You ought to know that, by this time."

July 3. — "I shall probably make no more exchanges this summer. I read my request for a dismission, yesterday. Heaven knows I have no wish to leave Worcester county or my own people; but I was breaking down under the futility of attempting to do what I could not, and what, for all my efforts, was half undone."

July 7. — "I am glad of what you say about the step I have taken. I hope none of the brethren will say anything else. It has cost me enough not to be bothered by being told that it was a mistake. I, at least, am perfectly clear about it as a matter of judgment, and have no misgivings, saving and except the problem that chiefly haunts us now, — where my people are to find a man.

"The parish will decide the matter on Monday. I have not much doubt that they will let me go, — not because they wish me to, but because they know I think it is best. I am not in such sorry plight as to justify the demand from my present condition merely. I shall be in preaching order hereafter, I trust, and well as ever by the first of October. I am gaining strength every day. But this has been my experience now

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these four summers, — is likely to be for the next four. It is mean and miserable to be disabled thus in the very cream of the year. My plan is, to recruit six months or a year; then get a smaller place, and, with my stock of sermons, start fairly, with some reserved power and a prudent expenditure of strength."

Dorchester, July 15. — "I suppose you were surprised at my resignation, — perhaps hurt, that I had said nothing to you about it. The fact is, I had scarcely consulted anybody; partly because it was unpleasant to me to talk about, and partly because it was a matter in which nobody was so competent to advise as I was to decide for myself. It was not, however, a hasty, but a long-meditated, step. My judgment was, and is, perfectly clear about it, as the best thing to do. Not that my health is more impaired than in former years, but that every summer brings me down; and thus, for all effective labor, the very best part of the year is lost. It is a serious detriment to the parish, and, what with overwork, and the consciousness of much undone, is wearing me out. The parish have thrown the decision back into my hands, and the whole matter is doubtful and undetermined as ever. If my judgment dictates one course, my feelings counsel another. There are a thousand reasons why I should stay, among which these are prominent: my own strong local attachments, the wishes of the people, the difficulty of finding a substitute, and the hope that I may be able, after a year or two, to meet the demands of the place better. At present, the balance in my own mind stands in perfect equipoise. . . . . The probability is, that I shall stay till next spring."

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August 14.—"It is really too bad. Here I have been pining in solitude and idleness a whole week. What a rare pleasure to have received a visit from you! Now I must go to Leominster, and to-morrow to Northfield, where my wife has been for a week. I cannot postpone it, because she expects me. I stay at N. a fortnight or longer, preaching my farewell at Leominster the first Sunday in September. About the middle of Sept., I expect to be at housekeeping in my father's house here. So I shall expect to see you,—I hope a good deal. Can you not be present at the Sept. Association at Fitchburg?

"I am slowly recovering health and strength, and have distinct and brave plans for the future, which I cannot stop to detail.

"Love to —— et al.

"Yours, affectionately,

"H. WITHINGTON."

The committee to which was referred his letter of resignation reported, that, in consideration of the enfeebled state of his system, and the little hope of a permanent recovery so long as his connection with the parish should continue, "it would therefore seem to be the dictate of wisdom and prudence to comply at once with the deliberate judgment of our pastor, who best knows, by experience, the amount of labor required to be done, and the measure of strength required to its full performance." In

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accordance with this report, his request for a dismission was granted, July 31; and it was "voted unanimously, to continue his salary to him till the first day of November next." And so ended his official connection with his church.

As the appropriate conclusion of this record of his personal labors, I transcribe the closing portion of his farewell discourse, delivered on the 3d of September: —

"And now let me counsel you to remember, that, in all that relates to the great subject of which I have spoken, you have your part to do. The institutions of Christianity depend upon you. If you are called, as I trust you will not be, to pass some months with a changing and uncertain ministry, do not on this account absent yourselves from the Sunday service. Feel rather that the obligation rests upon you more strongly, to be regular and constant in your attendance. It is of more importance that the fire should be kept burning upon the altar of the sanctuary, than that any favorite of yours should minister at that altar. The institution is more than the preacher.

"I need not say to you, when again you have settled a minister, give him freedom, attention, power, coöperation. I need not say, that all his usefulness depends as much upon you as upon him. But this let me say, for his sake and yours. Give him your sympathy and confidence. Open to him your minds and hearts. Entrust

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him with your spiritual experience, your aims and struggles, your difficulties and doubts. You will thus most effectually aid and encourage him in his labors. Thus will he be better enabled to understand and to meet your wants, and secure the best influence over you, when you have come near to him in friendship and confidence. Thus you will bestow upon him the greatest pleasure, and the highest reward of his efforts. Do not wait for him to make the first advances, but open yourselves the way to freedom of intercourse, and real communion of mind and spirit.

"There is nothing more disheartening to the minister, than, month after month, and year after year, to have little or no evidence that his preaching is felt. I do not mean that he needs to have it commended and admired. This mere superficial praise of his ability is very often an insult to his motives, and a wound to his spiritual sensibility. It is worth something, of course, to know that his pulpit services are acceptable. It is infinitely more, to know that they are profitable to his hearers. Do not leave him to doubt of this. Do not impose upon him the wearying labor of visiting you at your homes, to watch in vain for an opportunity of coming near to you, or of introducing some theme of conversation more profitable than the iterated trivialities of common intercourse. Not that you are to be always possessed with the idea that he is a minister, and must be treated differently from others because he is. Meet him as a man and a friend. Meet him with freedom and confidence. And, without trying to talk on sober or religious subjects as matters of duty or propriety, (a

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most constraining and profitless attempt,) if you have any spiritual vitality in you, any difficulty that asks counsel, any sentiment that seeks utterance, any trouble that craves sympathy, give him this proof of your trust and regard, that you be willing to express it to him.

"I leave you, as I found you, a united, peaceful, and church-going people. I thank God for that.

"I have said little of my own ministry, but it is not to be supposed that I have been able to forget myself, or the fact that I stand for the last time in this pulpit as its accredited organ. Much of past experience, much of deep feeling, much that I would gladly say, crowds upon me.

"Of my labors and their results I will not speak. My stay has been too short, my work too much broken in upon by experiences of ill-health and trial, to warrant it. I am too sensible of my own deficiencies and failures in duty, to have the right to calculate on great accomplishments, or even to say I have done what I could. I cannot but feel that mine has been, to some extent, a baffled, a defeated, and an unsuccessful ministry. And yet I should not utter my real feeling, and certainly I should do you injustice, not to speak of it with satisfaction and with thankfulness. With all its unrealized hopes, its unaccomplished aims, its unfavorable aspects, and acknowledged imperfections, I do not regard it as a failure. I trust, in your fidelity to the privileges of Christian institutions and the light of Christian truth, that my humble ministrations have not been profitless. What any minister could say of acknowledgment to any people, I can say truthfully to you. Much have I to

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acknowledge of your generosity as a people and as individuals, your patience, your candor, your charitable allowances for defects, your kindness and regard.

"To surrender the increased means of usefulness of nearly four years of acquaintance and experience, to leave a home endeared by so many memories of joy and sorrow, to break away from all the personal attachments and the local associations that bind me to the people and the place, this, as you know, it has cost me a long struggle to decide upon. Very gladly would I have spent my life here, where in the freshness of hope I began my labors as a preacher of the Gospel.

"But it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, nor is it for him to question the wisdom that is leading him. And I leave you not in discouragement, but in faith and hope, — hope for myself, that I shall have strength and opportunity to fulfil elsewhere a higher ministry, through the experience and discipline I have had among you, — hope for you too, that another, stronger in health and in ability, may lead you onward to higher attainments in the Christian life of thought and of love, of usefulness and devotion.

"Wherever we dwell in this world of time, the same heavens are over us, and the same benignant presence is around us, a guide and a protection. However apart our lives may lie henceforth, the sympathy of friendly regard, of common thoughts and aims, and of Christian faith and aspiration, will, I trust, unite me with many among you. In the pleasant memories, and the kindly affections, and the earnest prayers of my heart, you will always hold a place.

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"And now may all good gifts abound unto you. The faith and the spirit of Jesus abide with you, sanctifying your hearts and your homes. God Almighty keep and bless you, in joy and in sorrow, in time and eternity. FAREWELL!"

On Friday, the 15th of September,* he removed with his wife and child to Dorchester. Having an engagement to preach at Taunton the coming Sunday, feeling unwell, he went to Boston on Saturday, to procure a substitute. Not succeeding in this, he was obliged to set off himself for that place. On Monday he returned, by the cars, as far as Roxbury, and from there, failing of the stage, he was compelled to make his way home on foot, through the wet and rain. On reaching home, he began to complain of increasing illness, to remove which he resorted to his accustomed remedies. The next day, and the day following, being no better, a physician was sent for. His complaints had now begun to assume the appearance of fever. From this time he grew weaker and weaker, his stomach refusing almost all nourishment; so that his friends, becoming anxious for his situa-

* The subjoined account of his sickness and death is taken almost wholly, word for word, from the account given me by one of his near relatives at the time.

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tion, consulted other physicians, whose opinion was less favorable than had been hoped.

There were times when he expressed the conviction that his Master had yet some more work for him to do. Feeling, however, that the result was uncertain, he early embraced the opportunity, from day to day, as he felt strong enough and in the mood, to make his will, and settle his business affairs, so as to leave little to be done by others in case of his death. Being asked, on one occasion, if he would like to know the opinion of his physicians respecting his case, he replied, "Yes." Being told that he was thought not likely to live, he looked up with a smile, and said, "I am ready." Apparently, his mind was much enfeebled during his sickness, his bodily and mental powers very much depressed, and his frame nervously irritable; but what manifestations there were of mind and feeling showed that all was right within. He seemed perfectly aware of his condition, and spoke of dying with the utmost composure and tranquillity. One incident afforded him particular pleasure. His former Sunday School teachers and scholars, wishing to give him some token of their affection and respect, presented him with a handsome, richly-bound Bible. When the gift was hand-

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ed to him, he looked at it, and said, " They do, then, have some affection for me."

For three or four weeks from the commencement of his sickness, his friends continued to cherish hopes of his recovery ; but now symptoms of a more alarming character began to show themselves, — paroxysms of chill and fever, accompanied on one occasion with delirium, — which, in the opinion of his physicians, foreboded a fatal termination of his disease. These attacks, however, were not of long continuance, and gave place at length to more favorable indications. His food digested better, his nights were more tranquil, and his mind less disturbed. This apparent improvement in his condition continued nearly up to the day of his death, a period of two weeks ; so that his friends, who had now begun to indulge the hope of his convalescence, were taken by surprise by that event. On the morning of his decease, he was observed to be sinking rapidly, and his wife was called in. This was the first time of her entering his chamber for many weeks. At an early period in his sickness, she had been seized with fever, and separated from him. He smiled upon her, and reached out his hand, but was unable to speak. His death took place on Monday,

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the 30th of October, at half past ten in the morning. It was afterwards found that his lungs were much diseased; so that, in the opinion of his medical attendants, he could not have lived long, had he escaped the present sickness.

On Thursday, November 2d, his remains were taken to Mr. Hall's church, where a funeral service was held, and an address made by Mr. Hall. They were then removed to Leominster; and the day following, Friday, a funeral discourse was preached by Rev. Calvin Lincoln, of Fitchburg, to a large congregation, whom respect for the memory of the deceased had brought together. From the church the body was conveyed to the cemetery, and there deposited in its last resting-place. In the words of one who shared in these solemnities, "It was the noon of a beautiful autumnal day, and the sun, without a cloud, was looking down upon a congregation in tears, for he was now preaching to them his last and most impressive discourse. The young pastor, who had come to them in the full tide of life and hope three years before, who had walked among them so holily and unblamably, and won their affections, now led them into the beautiful grove where he had so often followed to soothe and sustain.

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There he sleeps beneath the virgin soil, while the spring-flower above him in its early decay shall image to the heart his brief life, and the pine-trees, that wave over him in their perennial verdure, shall be the emblems of the influence which he has left behind."

"Surely," writes a friend, "there was as little of earthly training left for him to carry out, as there could well be for any one. God could use him better, and has taken him. But for us I can say, that I had no truer friend, none whom I valued more, or could more utterly confide in. My only satisfaction in his leaving Leominster was the hope that he should get better and settle somewhere nearer to me. So, indeed, he is, if one had only the spirit to feel it."

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SELECTIONS.

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SELECTIONS.

THE PRESENCE OF THE DEPARTED.

"Are they not all ministering spirits?"

The sainted Dead! think you they linger not,
Nor e'er to this lone world return again?
Say, do they not revisit each loved spot
Whose sight doth waken such a thrilling strain
Within our longing hearts? O, not in vain
They came and went, — nor severed are those ties
That bound them to this life of joy and pain; —
They come, — they come, — and bid our spirits rise,
And dwell in peace with them beneath the heavenly skies!

They are about us; — as when Israel's flight
God's spirit guided through the desert's sand,
In cloud by day and fiery lamp by night,
And led in safety to the promised land, —
So round our path these guardian spirits stand,
To shield us 'mid temptation's fiery heat;
In sorrow's night to take us by the hand,
And lead us gently to that mercy-seat
Whence comes celestial light to guide our wandering feet.

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They come, where, in life's weary hours of care,
The fainting heart is burdened, tempted, tried;
Bringing from heaven the strength to do and bear,
The Father's pitying mercy hath supplied;
Beneath our roof at evening they abide
Like angel-guests whom Abraham fed of yore, —
Through the night's stillness watching by our side, —
Giving us visions of the world before;
That world of tranquil rest where partings come no more.

God's ministers, they watch each step of ours, —
The loved and lost that on life's morning smiled;
Amidst our sleeping and unconscious hours
They speak within our hearts in accents mild;
And as a mother soothes her fretful child,
With words of strength and peace our souls they cheer:
O, could we calm our earthly passions wild,
And see this spirit-host for ever near,
We ne'er could feel that all alone we wander here!

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ORDINATION HYMN.

Thy flock, O Lord, are scattered wide,
On barren heaths they roam,
And shepherdless they wander far
From their eternal home.
Lord, bring thy wandering children back,
And soothe their mourning cry;
Lead them where living waters gush,
And fair green pastures lie.

"For him who sat by Sychar's fount
Beneath the noontide beam,"
Who brought for every thirsting soul
The pure, refreshing stream,—
For him, "the shepherd of the sheep,"
Our thanks to thee we raise;
The hearts thy truth doth sanctify
Are vocal with his praise.

Clothe with salvation all thy priests;
Their minds with truth inspire;
With power and grace anoint their lips,
As from the altar's fire;
Till in each dark waste-place of earth
A gladdening fount shall spring,
And with the voice of joy and praise
The wilderness shall sing.

Leominster, 1846.

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I.

"Are they not all ministering spirits?"

SOMEHOW and somewhere, the Infinite Being that surrounds and overshadows us will meet us by the way, when we flee from danger starting up in our path like the burning fire of Horeb; or, when we have chosen the desert of wordliness for our resting-place, and a stone for our pillow, coming in a night vision to tell us of his presence though we knew it not, and showing us how we might have lain down on the pillow of God's peace with a blessed sense of the angelic guardians that watch our slumbers still, despite our cold unthankfulness.

In some startling or afflictive dispensation, God makes himself known to every man; — in the earth-quake that prostrates our hopes; in the fire that consumes our idolized treasures; or, it may be, in a still small voice, coming we know not whence or how. So have some hearts been turned to God by the serene influences of nature; and some, long withstanding his love, have sought him first when danger threatened on the mighty deep, and hope was failing in the heart, and there was nothing left but to cry unto him, "Save us, or we perish"; and

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sometimes the Divine presence is felt first when sickness makes the strong man as a little child in his weakness, or death stares him in the face, or the agony of a bereavement uncheered by faith wrings his heart. But, come how or come when it will, it is a mercy when we are thus recalled to ourselves, and, like the prodigal son in a strange land, are made to feel that we are exiles and starving, yet in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare.

Nor am I speaking only of those whose lives are grossly vicious and estranged from God ; but of you and me, of all of us; it is true, too true, that our faith in the spiritual world is not the reality that it should be, — that it might be. And I would vindicate the providence that crosses our path so often with a shadow of evil. It is not evil, if it bring to us the light and the growth it is designed to minister. At whatever price we may purchase a living sense of these great realities, let us pay it gladly. They are ministering spirits, these providences, sent to open our eyes, to warm our hearts, to show us higher truth, and help us live it out.

But never perhaps are we made to feel this sense of spiritual realities more impressively, never comes so clear a revealing of the feebleness of our faith, than when Death enters our dwellings, and calls away some object of our affections and our hopes. In the first shadow of our great affliction, the soul sits dumb ; and oftentimes it seems that the very

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force and suddenness of the shock have paralyzed our power to feel it. And when the power comes rushing back, does it seem as if our very being had lost itself in the past, and we live over again its glad and happy hours, and start if present realities force us to a consciousness of our loss and our loneliness. O, in that sea of the Past what memories and joys like shining pearls lie buried! We behold them glistening in the clear depths; we seek to grasp them again, but they come not back; and slowly, slowly, with many a longing, lingering look behind, we turn to the duty of the Present, and the hopes of the Future. But the night is over us, and the soul is wakeful, watching for stars to light its pathway. And that solemn night of sorrow is holy, and the stars that cheer it are those that never set.

At such seasons, the great mystery of life presses heavily on us, and a sense of our ignorance comes over our soul, and many questionings and doubts come upon us. Some of these questions I would attempt to answer.

And perhaps the first thought that rises in the selfishness of our grief, if it be not a murmur, is at least a question. Why should this trial come upon me? Why should I be singled out for this affliction? And to this there is but one answer, the answer already given, that the wise discipline of life, incomprehensible to our short-sightedness, is designed to promote our highest good. We must believe this. The law of life is a law of faith.

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But perhaps to the humble heart the question may assume another form. Was it as a judgment that this trial came? a just retribution for my sinfulness? Had I loved my friend too well, and so God, displeased at my forgetfulness of Him, hath taken away my dependence? No, no. Let no such thoughts as these make the night of sorrow darker, the burden of bereavement heavier. Doubtless thou didst need the discipline of trial, else it had not come. Thou doest well in seeking to learn its lesson. But not in anger, but in gentlest mercy, in tenderest love, was it sent to draw thee near to God, — not to increase thy fear, but thy trust. And least of all because God was jealous of thine earthly love did he remove its object. Can we love our friends too well? We may love them too selfishly, and so not well enough. We may love God too little; but it is not because we love our brethren here too much. For if it be true that no man can love God whom he hath not seen, except he love his brother whom he hath seen, it is also true that the more we love God the better we love our earthly friends.

And next to these inquiries for ourselves come questionings for the departed. Why passed they away when we seemed most to need them? Why, when their hopes were brightest, and their promise of usefulness was fullest, should they be called from us? And perhaps the only answer that can be given is that which bids us trust and be still. And yet,

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even to our sight, there are considerations which may throw light on these, which we call God's mysterious dispensations. Remember first all that thy friend hath done for thee while yet you walked together here. Will not the remembrance of the tender affection and the virtuous example thou wert privileged so long to share and to see, — will not that have new power over thee now? Perhaps the memory of the dead may bless thee more than the presence of the living. Live they not, — those who have left us, — live they not still, in all that made their life pleasant to us, all that makes their memory dear? They have not ceased to act upon us, so long as we remember them. Are they not ministering spirits, when the thought of them keeps us from evil, or helps us to live higher and purer?

But is this all? Is there not something more than the reflected influence on our character of the lives that have closed? Is there not an actual presence of the departed? No word of revelation hath distinctly spoken it; but it is a theory that springs up spontaneously in the mind; it is a faith natural to the heart. Somewhere, the spirits of the blessed find scope for their powers, and exercise for the soul's benevolence and activity. And why not here, where their thoughts and affections most naturally turn? Why may they not descend to bring an answer to our prayers, in holy and healing influences? Why may they not be near to strengthen

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us in the time of duty, to watch about our path, and shield us from impending danger, and help us to resist temptations else too strong for our feebleness? May they not thus be ministering spirits, to watch our sleeping and to shield our toiling and tempted hours? The strength that so often comes with bereavement, — a strength and calmness that seem marvellous and superhuman to ourselves, — it is almost inevitable that we refer it to the ministration of one whose visible presence is with us no longer. That we should ever deem this to be a visionary faith, comes of our material temper, and our little conversance with spiritual things.

Shall we know the friends from whom we have been separated by death? Shall we meet them again in heaven? How eagerly the heart answers this question! Yes, — we shall, we must. It is a necessity for us who live to believe it. It must be, or they who have gone from us would miss the peace of their heavenly home. If we believe in immortality at all, then must our affections be immortal. And surely that joy which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, must comprehend a restoration to those who, though long unseen, are not forgotten. Reason says this, and the heart demands it; and we must confidently believe it, if this were all. But not only does the spirit of Christianity imply this of necessity, but Jesus has expressly affirmed it. "Father, I will also that

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they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." And if they are present with him, then also with one another. And if, indeed, we could conceive of an isolated heaven, where we should be shut out from the society of our brethren, — if of an immortality that annihilated this life and its affections, — then would heaven be a worthless gift, and immortality the most shadowy delusion.

December 13, 1845.

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II.

"The spirit of the living creature was in the wheels."

ALL thought takes form in one way or another. Hence we learn the attributes of God through the material universe. We know a man's character by the dress he wears, the house he builds, the work he follows. The tendency of everything spiritual is to embody itself in some outward shape; and the institution is the shadow of the thought it embodies, and shows plainly enough the principle it is founded on.

But if institutions show the character of individuals and societies, it is no less true that they go continually to form and mould that character. Every outward form is the sign of an inward thought or feeling; and as it grew out of that thought or feeling, so it has a tendency to cherish and foster the same. Cruel laws tend to make a cruel people. Wicked rulers reflect back their own character in those whom they govern and influence. A foolish custom perpetuates folly in those who practise it.

Once more: when you do away an institution, you do away also in degree the spirit or doctrine or thought which it embodied and represented. If you

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could do away common schools, you would also lessen greatly the general interest in education ; for while the institution exists, men cannot very well forget the thing it stands for. So, if the temperance organization were disbanded, everybody would infer that the interest in the cause had subsided ; and the presumption would be its own fulfilment.

There has been amongst us of late years a marked impatience of restraint ; a clamorous demand for individual freedom ; a great dread of organized power in any form. This tendency is observable in church and in state alike, designated by such maxims as, That is the best government which governs least, — a statement of very doubtful truth ; — indicated by the numbers that forsake our churches, and would fain make the whole week sacred by taking away the sacredness of the Sabbath. The times call, as I think, for a strongly conservative movement in these respects. We must have some outward machinery to do the work of society. Let us not be in a hurry to destroy that which exists, but rather strengthen the things that remain. At least let us hold to that which is, until something better is offered us.

The Christian Sabbath has come down to us as a time-honored and time-hallowed institution. We were taught to keep it reverently, strictly. It has done us good so to keep it. It is a sacred trust, transmitted to us from our ancestors, and woe to us

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and our posterity, if we do not guard its sanctity from desecration! And the same thing we may say of public worship. If any man believes it a custom which promotes the public good, he is bound, whether he supposes himself to be benefited or not, to give it his countenance and support. He does not stand alone in this matter. It is no question of simple individual advantage. It concerns the public good; and a man who would discharge his duty to society cannot hold in regard to it a neutral position. These things are not duties written on man's nature, — not to be put on the same standing with the law of honesty, truth and devotion; but they grow out of our existing condition; and to neglect them is to sap the foundations on which the public integrity and public devotion rest. Do away with everything that is reverenced, and you do away with the sentiment of reverence; it has nothing to cling to or act upon. The spirit of the living creature is in the wheels; and you cannot destroy the outward form without marring the inward spirit.

The Christian rites of Baptism and Communion, — I rest these on the same ground, as claiming respect for the individual's welfare, and alike for the public benefit, because they enshrine and represent the public sentiment of veneration. I claim for them no Divine authority, — I do not believe they have any, — but I do claim for them the sanctity of centuries of hallowing associations, the sanctity of

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Christ's own participation. I do marvel that the parent's heart, into which God hath put a new song, doth not rejoice to bring to this temple of his praise the little one he hath given, and dedicate it to him. Nor to the parent alone doth it bring a blessing, but to many a heart beside; for there is an influence in the hushed stillness of the baptismal hour that ofttimes makes the old man weep and the little child hold down his head to hide the gushing tears. Bring them hither, — the infant ones, — that their purity may hallow the air we breathe, that their innocent presence may waft to our hearts a benediction. I wonder, too, that our commemorating rite of discipleship is not felt to be a greater and more obligatory privilege. It has no mysterious efficacy, but it is a strength and a help. It enshrines a sacred memory. Why should not the disciple thus remember the Master? For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.

March 7, 1846.

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III.

"A wheel in the midst of a wheel."

THE distinction of body and spirit is universal. Everything has an outward form, which is not the thing itself, but only the appearance of the thing. Everything has also an inward spirit. Thus we call our laws and rulers the government, although in strict truth they are only the shadow or form of the government, — the real power, the soul of government, so to speak, being in the people, from whom these laws and rulers derive their authority.

So what we call the course of nature, or the operation of material laws, is nothing more than the way in which God chooses to act, — the outward form in which he manifests himself. The stars revolve, the wind blows, the flowers blossom, because God is in the stars, the wind, and the flowers.

There is nothing perhaps of which we may not say, that it has a body and a soul. Especially is this true of everything with which man has anything to do. He is always a wheel within a wheel. Yet some men do not perceive this. They never see God in nature, nor ever get deep enough to see the soul in other men's actions, or to put any soul into their

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own. Have patience with me, and I will show you what I mean.

You are going out to ride, I will suppose. You go for your own pleasure alone. If you have no higher duty claiming your time, that is very well, — innocent and right. But it occurs to you that your neighbour has a sick child, and so you take him with you, and try to amuse him and make him happy by the way. Now is it not plain, that your ride becomes a very different matter? The act is the same; but whereas, in the one case, you would soon have forgotten the whole thing, it will remain with you now a pleasant recollection. You have embalmed it, — put a soul in it; and in the mirror of eternity it is reflected back upon you a thousand times, making you better and happier when you think of it.

Or you are going out into your field, — I will suppose you are an irreligious and selfish man, — and while you are at work you are thinking of the drudgery of labor, and wondering why you were not born to riches and ease, perhaps with an envious spite calling to mind those whose lot in life seems brighter and more favored than your own. The sun beats hot on your head. Perhaps you are impatient at the heat, not remembering it is sent as a blessing. Yes, indeed, you are a poor, pitiful drudge. Your lot is hard. But it is you who make it so. The hardest work a man can do is to quarrel with Provi-

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dence. The heaviest burden a man can carry is a thankless heart.

But now suppose by God's grace your hard heart melts down under that summer sky. A sudden sense of your ingratitude and of God's goodness comes over you; and sitting down, you muse upon the past, — how much God has done for you, how little you have done for him. Conscience, long dormant, awakes in your breast. You grow humble, contrite. Penitence comes over you like a flood. Your spirit becomes soft and gentle as a little child's; and kneeling there in the shade, with tearful eyes you ask God to forgive and bless you, — to help you to live no longer for yourself, but for him, — to strengthen you to keep the new resolutions that are springing up within you. You go to your work again, a sadder and a wiser, ay, and, strange as it may appear, a happier man. And now, going on day by day in the new life you have begun to live, everything is changed to you. You see that labor is God's appointment, — idleness not a blessing, but a curse. You are willing to work when you feel it is in God's service, and for the sake of the dear ones he has given you. You go to your field with a heart full of thankfulness, and your very labor is transformed by the change in yourself. You have new thoughts, and many more than before. You wonder how you could have been deaf and blind to so many things. God comes and works with you in that furrowed

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field. His smile is in the sunbeams that make the earth fruitful, and warm your heart with a sense of his bounty. You hear his voice of love in the song of birds, and the soft rustling of the corn-field that sways gracefully in the summer wind. You look up at the clear blue sky, and think of the peaceful world your childhood was taught to believe lay beyond it; and its purity and peace are reflected back in your own soul, filling it with an unspeakable joy. Marvellous change! And all this is not a fancy picture, but, thank God, a great and blessed reality borne witness to in many a man's experience. This is what I mean by putting a soul into things. This is the wheel within a wheel. O, my brother, have you got beyond the outward husk of things? Have you found the inner soul that makes them living?

March, 1846.

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IV.

THE CHILD'S MISSION.

THERE is a mystery about that new life, which impresses us almost with a sense of awe. We scarce can think of it as new; and, tracing back the spirit to its author, God, we follow it in fancy to the world of God's more immediate presence, and while we speak of it as heaven's gift, we half believe it had a preëxistence there.

And if we thus follow back in fancy the young spirit to its source, speaking of heaven as its first home, we follow it also into the future, and wonder what its life shall be there. "The child is father of the man"; and we wonder what sort of man. All the possible varieties of character and fate appear for the moment to be collected into that diminutive consciousness. That which may be the germ of any is felt as if it were the germ of all. The thread of life, which from our hand that holds it runs forward into instant darkness, untwines itself there into a thousand filaments, and leads us over every track and scene of human things; — here, through the passages where poverty crawls, — there, to the fields where glory has its race; — here to the midnight lake,

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where meditation floats between two heavens, — there to the arid sands, where passion pants and dies. We wonder, almost tremblingly, what its life shall be.

To the Christian, the being of the little child is not the wreck, but the elements, of a heavenly existence, — its better life lying before it, not behind. It is not the ruin, but the design, of a temple not made with hands. Its glory is not of the past, but of the future; its experience here not a loss, but a gain, of truth and goodness; this earthly life not the extinction of, but the preparation for, a spiritual one. It were a sadness to take up the infant life as if it were the fallen petals of a celestial flower, borne to our feet by the stream of things, and every moment fading more; but it is a task of gladness to accept it as the seed and germ of an everlasting growth, which, planted in the rock, and strengthened by the storms of earth, shall bloom at length in the eternal fields.

To nurture the faculties of conscience, love, and devotion, to guide the inquiring spirit of childish curiosity to fields of useful knowledge, to form habits of virtue and holiness, to give right ideas of God and man, of duty and sin, of life and death, of time and eternity, — this is a responsibility so solemn as to invest every parent's life with the sanctity of a divine mission. When you consider that your ignorance is so much loss of knowledge to the child you teach, that your failure to see what the best course of guid-

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ance is may be fraught with perilous consequences to his present and eternal weal, — when you remember that the atmosphere of home, whatever it is, whether of jarring discord and harshness or of quiet and gentle love and peace, will stamp itself on that yet unstained soul entrusted to your charge, — that all your faults will almost inevitably be translated and reproduced there, — that thus your discontent, your repining, your fretfulness, your neglect of life's duties, your love of ease, your worldly engrossment, your forgetfulness of God, all your follies and vices and weaknesses, will be reflected in the countenance and the character of one so dear to you, — is not the gift of a little child a new call to purity of life, and a fresh consecration to duty? And as Jesus said of his disciples, "For their sakes I sanctify myself," so should the parent's heart, with a solemn sense of the high commission entrusted to it, and the great responsibility of its office, on the altar of its thankfulness dedicate itself afresh to God.

It is a blessed thing, that, as so many drop away from life, and of those who started with us in its morning freshness so few remain, these new beings, in God's merciful providence, are sent to make life still a thing of beauty and pleasantness; to save the heart alike from selfishness and misanthropy; to quicken, as by the bestowal of a second youth, its own kindling aspirations; to warm the affections into a new life; to give new vigor to the mental ener-

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gies; to bind the heart anew to man; to kindle it afresh with a devout gratitude to God; to consecrate it again in the vow of a truer fidelity. The little child is quite as much the teacher as the taught, and, I had almost said, forms the parent's character in as great a degree as the parent influences its own.

And think not that the mission of the little child ends with its life. The parting spirit, as a caged bird let loose again, may early fly home again to its native heaven. But its death was not premature. It has done its work; nay, it is doing it still. The light of its love hath not departed, nor the influence died out. The heart once blessed with a parent's joy is for evermore so blessed. The child no longer present is yet in store for thy weeping eyes and thy longing heart. It waits there in that upper mansion to welcome thee, — its love unquenched, its innocence unstained. And shrined as its memory is in thoughts of purity and holiness, is not such a memory a preacher and a benediction? Does it not call thee to a purer life, and keep thee near to God? Therein, perchance, its death may bless thee more than its life could have done. There is nothing innocent or good that dies and is forgotten. An infant, a prattling child, dying in its cradle, will live again in the better thoughts of those who loved it, and play its part through them in the redeeming actions of the world, though its body be burnt to ashes, or drowned in the deepest sea. There is not an

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angel added to the host of heaven, but does its blessed work in those that loved it here. Forgotten! O, if the good deeds of human creatures could be traced to their source, how beautiful would even death appear! for how much charity, mercy, and purified affection would be seen to have their growth in dusty graves!

September 13, 1846.

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V.

"So that I come again unto my father's house in peace."

It is not possible, that, speaking to you on this day and on this theme, you should have forgotten, or I should have been able to keep out of mind, my own experience. I had shrunk from addressing you to-day. I had spoken to another to stand here in my place. It seemed that I could not do it. But I felt as if the associations of the day, full of home as they are, would be broken in upon by the voice of a stranger, instead of his whose highest happiness it is to feel, that he speaks to those who acknowledge his claim as friend and brother, — who have shown themselves ready to rejoice in his joy, to sorrow for his sorrows. I felt that you had a right to my poor words, and that they would be more welcome than those of another. Pardon me, then, that for one moment I thus call for your sympathy in alluding to myself. It is not to cast a shade over the hopes and the gladness of the day, but to deepen the sense of your own blessings, — to urge you to a more thankful recognition of them. And there is a word, that is pleading so strongly in my heart for utterance that I cannot but speak it.

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A year ago, the joy of a new hope made more dear and sacred to me the name and the thought of home. The shadow of desolation that fell so suddenly upon me was not a starless night. God give unto you, if any similar affliction awaits any of you, the strength and the consolation that his mercy has bestowed upon me. The early blight of my own hopes has not taken away, perhaps it has strengthened and deepened, the interest and the sympathy with which I regard the happy family circles around me. And that interest has been immeasurably increased by the hearty welcome you have given me there, and the kindly sympathy you have shown me. Greatly have I been cheered and strengthened by the many kind attentions I have received. Very deeply has it moved me, to know that so many hearts were feeling for me, and turning toward me the softness of a gentle and forbearing friendliness, as one who needed to be dealt with tenderly. I can do no less than to thank you for it all to-day, — to thank you from a full heart. You have been willing to share in my grief. I, too, am able to rejoice in your prosperity. Can I do less than invoke a blessing on the many homes, to which you have welcomed me all the more affectionately because you remembered that my own home had been made desolate ?

God Almighty bless you, my people ! Long be the circle unbroken that gathers to-day about the

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firesides of home! Long may it be, ere one of those voices be missed that make up its music to-day!

But God knoweth best. I have no dearer prayer, than that those homes may be Christian homes; and then, come joy or sadness, they shall still be blessed.

I have no better wish to bestow upon you, than that, to your other blessings, manifold and great as they are, God may add this day the greatest and the best of all, — the blessing of a thankful and trusting heart.

November 23, 1846.

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VI.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones."

THE actual results of the Sunday School, I am inclined to think, have been exaggerated; but its real importance and its possible results are still, as I believe, far from recognized, and greatly under-estimated. If it had as yet accomplished nothing, if it were doing no good at present, it would still claim support from every true mind from what it promises, for the prospects it holds out, for the hopes that are garnered in it.

The Sunday School has become an institution. It is established over a large part of Christendom. It has gained a strong foothold. An interest is felt in it. It has enlisted, more or less warmly, the sympathies of thousands of parents and children and teachers. Now grant, that, through unskilful modes of operation, or the incompetence of teachers, — grant for a moment, that at present it is doing little, — if you will, that it is doing nothing, — and then it would challenge support for what it may do, what it is likely to do hereafter. The machinery is there, ready to be put into more advantageous operation, when better and wiser modes of action shall be found.

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The children are there, ready to be acted upon. For the most part, the battle with prejudice and opposition has been fought, and parents look upon it with a considerable measure of hopefulness and confidence. Suppose, now, that it were everywhere to be given up; how long do you think it would take to reëstablish it in its present extent and strength? You could not reconstruct it in half a century. The spirit of opposition would spring up again. The old obstacles would have to be surmounted. Slowly and laboriously the children must be gathered in. Confidence must be reëstablished. The charm and excitement of novelty no longer operate in its favor, and prejudice strengthens itself immeasurably by asserting that the experiment has been tried, and proved a failure.

So long as the Sunday School engages the interest, and secures the support, of a community as such, it will have strength and vitality. When it ceases to be popular, and is the movement of the few, and not of the many, then it will dwindle into a weak and sickly inefficiency. Therefore it is, that every child who is an absentee from the School is an enemy to its existence. He becomes the centre of an influence hostile to its life and growth. Therefore it is, that I have so repeatedly urged upon all to whom it was practicable, the old and the young, a connection in some way with the Sunday School. The question is not, simply, whether it can do you any

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good, but also whether you can do it any good. It has claims in and of itself. If you regard it as a beneficial and valuable institution, then you ought to consider, that, of the public sentiment and sympathy which is its strongest support, you, as an individual, make up a part. You are responsible for the way your influence goes, and for the degree in which it is exerted.

Religious teaching always implies this danger to the taught: if it does not make them better, it will render them more callous to good influences; it will chill and harden the soul; it will take away the force of truth, and the power of moral appeal. There is nothing, in fine, which is more deadening in its influence than the hearing the most sacred and inspiring truths without being moved by them. Your great object, remember, is not to instruct, not to impart knowledge, but principle; to strengthen the sense of duty; to make the life righteous and pure; to sanctify the spirit. You cannot give a spiritual life you do not yourselves possess.

O, I would rather send a child out to spend the blessed Sunday in the fields, than have him here to listen to the cold and idle mummery of words to which the teacher's heart lends neither life nor love! There, as he wandered, with God's loving sunlight shining round him, and the spring breeze kissing his cheek with a gentleness like that paternal presence that enfolds him, the glad melody of birds sounding

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in his ear, and the flowers of an Almighty Beneficence upspringing in his path, — there his spirit might be softened and his soul made better, his heart attuned to purer influences, and drawn upward with a reverent gratitude, while all around the unsentient universe hymned the great Creator's praise! At any rate, he would be saved from the crushing and paralyzing chill and torpor that must come from a heartless teacher, in whom a child, training for immortality, awakens no thrill of affection, no kindling inspiration, and from whose lips the words that Jesus spoke fall coldly and listlessly as the current rumor or the trivial tale.

But I know, Teachers, that you must come anxiously, distrustingly. So you ought. Take it as a hopeful token if you do. And yet you should come in confidence; for, be sure, whatever want of competence you may feel, with whatever consciousness of unworthiness you may assume the office, yet the faithful effort brings God down to help you, and the true spirit gives power and inspiration to the feeblest words, — as the fire of Pentecost touched the lips of those illiterate Jewish fishermen with a baptism of eloquence that none could gainsay or resist.

May, 1847.

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VII.

DUTIES OF PUBLIC WORSHIP.

THE question is often asked, how much good preaching does; and very often answered, to the preacher's own mind, in an almost utter despair of its efficacy. Considering its necessary and inevitable deficiencies, "the foolishness of preaching," as the Apostle terms it, — considering the state in which the hearer's mind often is, and how many dismiss all thought of it the moment the service is over, — one cannot but feel, sometimes, a doubt whether it does accomplish much. And, certainly, considering the topics discoursed upon, the labor of preparation, ordinarily but poorly appreciated, and the solemn interests involved, one may be pardoned for saying that preaching, with all its imperfections, does deserve a great deal more attention than it receives.

Brethren, I am free to confess it, there are seasons when preaching seems to me a trivial and insignificant thing, — when I shrink from it with a strong repugnance, and a sickening doubt of its utility. But these are the times when I am thinking of my own powers, and looking about for outward results of my own efforts.

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But there are other times, when I am impressed with admiration and a solemn awe as I reflect upon my office. Then, it is the preacher that is insignificant. Preaching becomes invested with a sacredness and a grandeur such as belong to no other work of man. I look back to the early days of the race, when the voice of the prophet, solemn and stern, swayed the rude nations of warlike men as the tempest's breath makes the oaks of the mountain tremble. I see the haughty Saul quailing before the presence of Samuel, and David bowing down upon his kingly throne as the words of Nathan sank into his heart with the weight of conviction, "Thou art the man!"

I glance onward in the records of history to later times, when the loud voice of Luther rang through all Europe, and shook the grim walls of that imperial palace at Rome, where the delegated Hierarch claimed to hold the keys of heaven, and put his foot upon the neck of prostrate kings. Few years have passed away, and Luther's truth has filled the world.

I look over the earth, and see the nations that rejoice to claim the name of Christian, and the countless streams that flow from the sacred fount of revelation. I look back to the origin of all in those eleven men of Judea, who, with death before them and the world against them, went forth to preach in the name of Jesus. I call up to mind his venerable image, as he walked about his native land, an humble

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man among the humble, teaching by the well of Samaria and in the fisher's boat. Then it is that I learn to estimate the dignity of preaching, when I contemplate the results it has effected, — when I remember who have borne its office.

Then I no longer look upon my work distrustingly, or as trivial. I tremble before its majesty. I am amazed at my own presumption in assuming it. Then, when I think of the materials to be wrought upon, — the wondrous mechanism of human souls, the thinking mind, the beating, sensitive heart, mysteriously responding to the touch that sweeps its thousand chords, the godlike energy of intellect and will that lie concealed in man, constituting him the image and the child of the Infinite; — when I think of the themes on which the preacher speaks, — the soul's eternal weal, the heaven within, the immortal life to come; — when I think of the instrumentalities put into his hand, — the truth, the words, the life, of that divine Brother, who was God's Messiah sent to save the world, — then it seems to me an unspeakable privilege if I may be the humblest servant ministering at the altar of God to such beings, in such a name, and for such ends.

Then, too, I remember that the preacher, to fulfil his high commission, ought to come heaven-ordained; knowing the everlasting relations between God and man in his own experience; his soul really communing with the Infinite, and filled with His holy

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spirit; burning to impart the same godlike consciousness to others, and, by the vivid light of his own faith, creating it in those who feel his influence; drawing out and freshening the faded colors of the divine image in their souls, till they, too, become the prophets and the sons of God.

If, indeed, one might come thus consecrated to his work, then would preaching be no longer the cold and powerless thing it is. Not one of you but would go home wondering at the divine capacities God has poured into the souls of men, — melted into mingled gratitude and penitence at God's exceeding love and your own conscious guilt, and making in your inmost soul vows sanctified by prayer, that the revelations you had heard should not be lost upon you, but bring forth fruits manifest to God's all-seeing eye, in holy hearts and lives devout and true.

August 22, 1847.

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VIII.

"Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

THERE is another class of errors which it was my purpose to speak of more particularly. It consists in cutting off from Christianity this or that feature or element as neither essential nor important. For example, there are many who speak of devotion as mere cant, or, at least, as an entirely superfluous and delusive thing; whose language is, "God does not need or ask our prayers; we can do nothing for him; the best service we can render him is, to do good to our fellow-men." I do not censure these persons. They do but express their own sincere conviction. But I cannot but pity them. For to lose the faith in God as ever present, and as drawing near to the soul in answer to its prayers, to lose the spirit and forego the privilege of devotion, seems to me a loss greater than any earthly loss can be. To me, life would be of small account, nay, it would be an intolerable burden, if I knew that never again I could lift my soul to God in thankfulness or petition, with a real faith that he would hear me. Yet I know that many of those of whom I speak may be better men than myself. It takes a

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great and an uncommon virtue to be just and benevolent and faithful towards man when this spiritual faith in God is lost. And I cannot help it, that, while I honor in all sincerity the philanthropy I see in such persons, I am led to doubt the permanency of its foundation. I know that sympathy for man will do much, that the love of justice is a principle inherent in the human heart; and yet, to separate humanity from devotion, — the love of man from the love of God, — I confess human virtue seems too weak, human nature too frail and dependent, to bear the fruit of a sound morality and a self-sacrificing benevolence that has not its root in love and trust towards God. To take away from Christianity its devotional element is to rob it of its spirituality, and (to my own conviction) to take away the main source of its power.

There is another class, who consider the belief in the history of the Gospel to be of very small account. The miraculous claims and the infallible authority of Jesus seem to them not important to make one a Christian. Christianity is a spiritual thing; it belongs to the heart. If they have the truth, it is no matter how or whence it comes, or whether attested by miracles or not. I cannot judge for others, but, for myself, I must say, that, if Christ's words were not to me of the most certain and undoubted authority, there are many questions of duty, now clear as the sunlight, that would be involved in the dim-

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most uncertainty. There are many doctrines, most precious and consoling, that, to say the least, would become vague and doubtful. I should hardly trust in prayer. I should hardly feel confident of a personal immortality. There would still be a God; but I cannot but feel the tender and blessed name of a Father would be one I should not venture to give to a Being so infinitely removed from my comprehension. In fine, if the miraculous claims of Jesus are denied, I could give but little weight to what remains of the gospels, coming as it does from men singularly deceitful, or singularly capable of being deceived.

Again, there are those who, disgusted with the tenacity with which the sectarian has clung to doctrines the most unimportant, and the exclusiveness he has manifested toward those who dissented from him, have come to regard the whole matter of doctrine as a thing of small importance. It is no matter, say they, what a man believes, if his life be upright and pure. Certainly, this statement is perfectly reasonable, — if his life be upright and pure. But when you have told me what a man's doctrine is, I know what his life will be, if he sincerely believes it. The one grows out of the other, as a plant from the seed. A man who believes God to be revengeful, will feel warranted in being so himself. He who thinks there is no difference in the condition of men after death, will lose one of the

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great sanctions and safeguards of virtue. He who thinks human nature totally depraved, may well excuse many corrupt and wicked actions, charging them to the account of Adam's fall, and not his own sin; while one who has half persuaded himself that man has no free-will, and cannot do otherwise than what he does, will not strive much to resist temptation, unless he sees the penalty very close at hand, and very certain.

September 5, 1847.

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IX.

"A cloud of witnesses."

THE simplicity and the commonness of the statement finds its abundant excuse in its necessity. A cloud of witnesses, — yes, there are, — visible and invisible, beholding our sins and our unfaithfulness, and bearing testimony before God to every act. Suppose any one of us to pass at this moment into the solemn realities of the spiritual world. Imagine that, having left behind your fleshly vestment, you stand in the midst of God's universe, a soul undisguised, unshielded, and perfectly open and transparent to the pure eye of God and all spiritual beings. It must be that at that very moment the dread account of life should begin, — the judgment of Heaven's retributive tribunal. And who are the witnesses? Let us, in imagination, conceive of them as they rise up before us.

First, there is the inward consciousness of guilt, — an all-sufficient witness. Conscience, no longer blinded by the mists and delusions of sophistry, no longer silenced by the refusal to hear its voice, sees clearly, and speaks plainly. The soul's eye is opened and cannot be shut, but, by an irrevocable

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doom, must look in upon itself. The tablets of memory, from which the hand of death has brushed away the oblivious dust that gathered beneath the body's wrappages in the soul's journey through time, shall display now the secrets of a life, — the sins of youth, forgotten in after years; the hidden motive, skilfully concealed before; the secret thought, over which, it had been fondly deemed, the mantle of forgetfulness was for ever thrown; the deed done in darkness, when no mortal eye beheld. Written there, in eternal chronicles on the soul's imperishable being, all shall stand revealed; and not a word spoken, or a deed done, or a thought conceived, but we shall read it there.

Nor these alone will memory summon up; but there shall rise the long catalogue of wasted hours, and misused privileges, and opportunities neglected, and resolutions broken, and vows unfulfilled; the countless blessings of Heaven, winning us to the love and service of God; the words of counsel and entreaty to which we have turned a deaf ear, — perhaps a father's anxious warning, perhaps a mother's tearful prayer, despised.

Then, too, the crushed and neglected powers of the spiritual nature shall assert their claims. And it shall need no outward voice of reproof, but it shall feel within itself the voice of God, saying, "I gave thee a capacity and a thirst for knowledge, — how hast thou neglected and despised the gift! I gave

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thee a sense of truth, a nature of affection, — how hast thou crushed the one and profaned the other! I gave thee a spiritual aspiration, an inborn thirst for holiness, — how hast thou corrupted and debased the immortal soul, to do the bidding of the body's lusts! Thou mightest have been an angel of light in wisdom, in virtue, and in love. How art thou fallen, to be a grovelling worm of the dust!"

But the witnesses shall not be all within. The soul shall summon them from the east and the west, from the north and the south; yea, into things inanimate will a voice be put. For who has not known the strange and mysterious conviction of sin that sometimes even here forces itself upon the guilty from everything around him, and how, sometimes, after a deed of evil, a man trembles at every rustling leaf, and fears to look up lest he should read the doom of punishment in the first object he beholds? He feels that his dreadful secret is betrayed in his countenance. The stars, the moonlight, glance a lightning reproof. The still water, as he looks into it, glows back upon him the reflection of his own haggard face, and he trembles like one who sees some horrible phantom. He shrinks from the eye of his fellow-man, feeling that it will look into his dark breast and read the history that he reads there so plainly. And how much more vivid will all this be, when the unveiled soul can by no possibility find a hiding-place from itself, or cover up from others' sight its inward vileness!

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There shall gather round us, in imagination, in that awful hour, those nearest in kindred, — the little circle of home. O, if then a parent bears the unwilling testimony to the child's disobedience, — if then the consciousness is forced home upon the soul, that a parent's gray hairs went down in sorrow and in shame to the grave for its unfaithfulness, — if then comes the bitter thought, that the child, God's mercy gave, lived dishonored and died despairing, through a parent's neglect or a parent's example, — then what untold agony shall roll in floods of bitterness upon that soul!

But there are other things for which retribution comes, — sins of omission, as well as commission, — of neglect, as well as positive wrong.

Methought I stood, a disembodied soul, before the throne of God. And, lo! the countless nations of men, all who have lived, were summoned there. Slowly, and in successive trains, they passed before that throne of God, and I beheld them all.

And first there came a spectre, hideous and pale, and following with slow and feeble steps the children of Want. And from their lips arose a feeble, plaintive cry that smote the heart with a desolate sadness; and that infinite eye turned full on me its searching glance, and I felt it say, "What hast thou done for these?"

And then there came one riding on a black horse, an iron sceptre in his hand. And him there followed

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the millions, on whom he had laid his bloody scourge, clanking their chains, and crying with a wail that rent the very heavens. And then a noise of many thunders, and I heard a fearful voice which said, "Woe to him that hath beheld Oppression in the earth, and hath not pleaded for the oppressed that had no advocate!"

And then I saw one rushing swiftly past, with maniac stride, and in his bosom burned a fire of glowing coals. And, as he went, he scattered firebrands, arrows, and death. Him there followed, with a riotous shout, a multitude that no man could number, and on every face the curse of Drunkenness was writ. And yet again I felt that awful eye, and, as I looked, I saw one there whose face I knew, and my heart sank down within me; for I had seen him, a young man, going down that fearful road to death and hell, and had not warned him!

Again came one fearful to look upon, and bearing in his hand a bloody sword. He rode upon a white horse, which, as he trod, mangled and crushed at every step the bleeding forms of men. And him there followed Death and Pestilence; and his murdered victims — a tenth part of all that ever peopled the broad earth — came after, and from their bloodless lips there rose a groan, that, like the roar of many waters, shook the sky, and called for mercy and for justice!

Yet once again my eye pierced through the infinite

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space, and, at a glance, I saw the gathered myriads. Yet once again the famished children's wail broke on my ear, — yet once again I heard the drunkards' mocking shout, the clank of heavy chains, and the loud groan that spoke War's horrible woe ; and then a voice from every soul among that infinite host, that shook the throne of God, and said, "*We are the witnesses!*" And I heard another voice say, "Inasmuch as ye have not done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have not done it unto me."

September 5, 1847.

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X.

"No man liveth to himself."

EVEN when one's opinion is perfectly clear and sound to his own mind, it does not follow that he has a right to preach, to print, or to promulgate it. He ought first to judge concerning the probability of its being rightly understood, and having a good influence in the world. There is a great deal of foolish talk about the safety of speaking the truth. "Is not a man bound to utter the truth? The truth can do no harm." There is a great deal of truth, that is at present of very little value; as, whether Methusaleh lived as long as he is said to have done, whether Cephrenes built the pyramid that bears his name, or whether (as Christians have fiercely contended) the light that shone around our Saviour at his transfiguration was created or uncreated. Nor is one, though always bound to speak the truth, if he speak at all, always bound to speak. There is great virtue in speech, and we are apt enough to forget our obligations to utterance. But there is often as great merit, and as strong an influence, in silence. It is yet again to be considered, even though we were to admit that truth can do no harm, whether one is

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quite sure he has the truth; and, if it should turn out error after all, how far he will be held responsible for its results.

Finally, I deny the main principle contended for, — that the truth must always do good, and can never do harm. Under certain circumstances, and in certain states of mind, you would not tell a person of his faults, though it might do him good to know them. Jesus did not controvert many popular delusions, — as the ascribing of insanity to the influence of evil spirits, — and often taught truth in parables, on purpose to render it obscure. Paul fed his converts with milk, and not with meat, because they were not able to bear it. Certain truths may be clear enough to you, may even be a blessing and a comfort to you, which another would receive so partially, or so entirely pervert, as to render them absolutely harmful to himself. Some truths are more important than others; and the lesser must be learned, oftentimes, before the greater can be fairly apprehended. You would not try to teach a child fluxions, before he had mastered simple addition. And sometimes, the pure, simple truth would do great harm. If the slaves could see the injustice of their masters, and feel the evils of their oppression, as you and I see and feel them, they would not be restrained by moral or Christian principle from rising in mutiny and violence to redress them, themselves. I would not proclaim to them my sense of their

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wrongs, if I had the opportunity. So I would not speak in the hearing of children of what I considered the faults or mistakes of their parents.

There is great looseness in the popular view of responsibility for opinions. All wrong action grows out of false principles of action, or at least, the absence of true principles. Want of truth makes want of goodness. Slavery owes its existence to false ideas of liberty; war, to false views of national morality and honor. The Inquisition was sustained by the doctrine that it was just and right to sustain God's true Church by violence, and to save men's souls by punishing them for heresy. There are some persons now, who deny the sanctity of marriage, the right of private property, the obligation to obey laws, the existence of any retribution beyond this life; — doctrines, whose prevalence would, I think, be in the highest degree pernicious. The fact is, one is just as responsible for the formation of his opinions as of his habits,—for the influence of his words as of his actions. There is no separating the two things. There can be no distinction between them. Truth is the foundation of goodness. Our actions grow out of our belief. And he who forms his opinions without thought, and recklessly promulgates them without regard to their influence, is as one "that casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, and saith, Am I not in sport?"

Let it not be supposed, that, in thus uttering my

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view of duty, I am condemning any man's opinion or conduct. No Scripture is of private interpretation, nor would I be thought to deny to another the liberty I claim for myself. But, as I had stated the duty of Christian non-conformity, it seemed fitting to state also its limitations.

The true reformer never assumes to be a saint, or proclaims himself the only faithful man in the world. He quietly speaks out, and lives out, his own conviction, calling upon other men to speak and to live out theirs. Nor is the Christian non-conformist troubled or angry at the misunderstanding or abuse of others. He is no martyr who is always calling upon the world to see how he is persecuted, and how well he bears it. Of all things, this is the last he thinks of. He is too much concerned for the truth to think of himself. And noble Stephen, when he dies, says nothing of the stones, but is filled with the glory of the heaven above him, and only remembers his murderers with a prayer.

March 25, 1848.

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XI.

"Yesterday."

I ADDRESS this sermon to the young. My text, children, is "Yesterday." You can all remember it, — "Yesterday."

Children are generally thinking so much of the future, — of what they are to do to-morrow, or when they grow up to be men and women, — that they do not often stop to look back. I remember, that, some years ago, passing through a piece of woods, I walked hastily on, looking only before me, till, after half an hour, I was surprised to find myself almost at the very spot from which I had set out. I had started to go to my father's house; but had strolled along so heedlessly, that I had actually turned about, and was walking in an opposite direction. I have often thought of this since, and it has seemed to me a good illustration of the way in which many live. For life is a journey, and it ought to be a journey towards our heavenly Father's house, — the home of the good and faithful. But is it not often so, that many, who set out with their faces turned towards that home, suffer themselves to wander heedlessly, till their steps lead further and further away from it?

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If we would know where we are, and which way we are travelling, we must sometimes stop and look back.

What should you think, if, this spring, some farmer should neglect, week after week, to plant his fields, and should say to his neighbours, when they asked him about it, "O, I intend to have as fine a harvest as any body, but you see I have not made up my mind yet what to plant"? You would say he was either foolish or crazy. But how is it with you? This is your spring-time of life. What did you plant yesterday? You know what I mean, — what kind of words and thoughts and actions, that will bring their harvest years hence. Do you not know? Then, are you not the foolish person, who has not made up his mind what to plant his field with? If the field is left unplanted all spring and summer, then nettles and thistles and weeds will spring up and grow of themselves, and that is what he will have to gather in when harvest-time comes.

One of the things you want to learn is, to be industrious, — to make a good use of time. I dare say that many of you have looked often towards the top of Wachusett, and wished you could be there for a little while. But it is tiresome to climb up the mountain; and what if some boy, who wanted to see the view, should go and sit every day at the foot, and wish he could be at the top, but never take one step toward ascending, because the way is steep and

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hard ? Now growth in goodness is like climbing a mountain. We must go on, step by step, with laborious effort. Well, how was it yesterday ? You want to learn to make a good use of time. Were you any more industrious than before, or did not you try, because it was so hard ?

Do not suffer yourself to think, that yesterday was only a small part of life, — that it is of no consequence if it was lost. Life is all made up of minutes, and unless you use the minutes well, it will all be lost. On the tops of high mountains you will see little streams starting and flowing down the rock. At first, they are fine and small almost as little threads ; you could stop them with your finger ; but they flow on, and soon others join them, and, as they descend, more and more unite, till at length they make a brook ; and then several of these brooks running together make small rivers, and these make large ones ; — so that, when you trace back the great river that is miles across, whose rapid current sweeps along hundreds of boats and great vessels, you find it all beginning in the little silver streams on the top of the mountain.

Do not think, of any bad action, "It is only once, — it cannot do much harm, — I will never do it again." You have seen boys in the winter slide or coast down a steep hill. They move slowly at first, but all the time the motion becomes swifter and swifter, till they reach the foot, and then it costs

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much more time and effort for them to get back to the top again. Is not this like one who is growing worse every day? He is going down hill faster and faster, though he does not know it. Is it true of any of you, that yesterday you became worse and not better, — went down the hill instead of ascending it?

I have read, that, as two men were building a ship, they came to a piece of timber that had a worm-hole in it. The question was asked, "Shall we put it in?" "It is but a single hole," says one, "and a small hole too." So they made use of the timber. The ship went to sea; but the worm was still there, gnawing; and at length, through this unsound timber, the ship sprung aleak, and went to the bottom. So it is with your character. Every bad word you speak, every wrong act you do, may be likened to the worm in the ship. You may think it is but one, and a little one; but it will eat up the purity and soundness of your character, and in the end you may learn, when it is too late, what a dreadful mistake it was to suppose that any wrong thing could be of little consequence. Was there some such thing in your experience yesterday, — something which conscience told you was wrong, but which you excused because it was a little thing? If you can think of such a case, then remember how the little worm at last destroyed the great ship.

Once, as a child sat, on a summer's evening, under

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a shady tree, he fell asleep. And he dreamed that three bright and beautiful angels stood over him. And while he wondered at the sight, one of them spoke to another, and said, "I have brought this garment of pure white, and this white lily that will never fade, to bestow upon him who is spotless and good." And the boy saw that on the angel's forehead was written its name. It was Innocence. Then the other angel spoke in reply, — "Look in this glass, which I hold in my hand, and you will see the picture of this sleeping child's life to-day. See how he has been disobedient and thoughtless and passionate, and has forgotten God and his prayers. I, too, would have given him this basket of precious jewels, but I cannot bestow them on such a one." Then the boy read the angel's name in her forehead. It was Memory. Then spoke the third angel, — "I, too, would have given him this golden crown, if he had been true and good." And her name the child read. It was Hope. Then the sleeper trembled when he remembered how he had spent a wicked and thoughtless day. And the angels bent their bright eyes sadly upon him, and Hope said, "We will meet here again in a year from this night." Then they suddenly vanished, and the sleeping boy awoke.

Very sadly he thought of his dream. But he resolved to live from that time a better life. And

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every night he went and sat on the same green bank, and called up all he had done during the day, and repented when he remembered that he had done wrong. Winter came, and he could no longer go to the shady bank. But as soon as the ground was bare, and the grass began to spring, and the violets blossomed, he would go again at evening, and sit under the tree. And so the year came round, and again he fell asleep there of a summer's night. And in his dream the three angels came again and smiled on him. "Now," said Memory, "I can give him the box of jewels, — the precious gems of virtue, and the recollection of good deeds, of kind and pure words and happy thoughts, better than all the wealth in the world." "And I," said Innocence, "will give him now the lily that never fades, the spirit of cheerful gladness, and the white robe of purity, such as the angels wear." "And I," said Hope, "have brought for him now the golden crown." Then the sleeping child thought he beheld himself lying there, with the golden crown on his head, and the lily in his hand, and he was clad in the white robe of Innocence and the jewels of Memory; and in the sky above him he heard the sound of music, and, looking up, he saw many bright ones with harps in their hands. The stars rose in the sky, and the moon shed its light on the child's face, and still he slept on. And they found him in the morning, a sweet

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smile on his lips, as though he were in a pleasant dream. But his eyes never opened on this world again. His spirit was not there. That had gone up with the angels.

April, 1848.

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XII.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

WHOSOEVER SPEAKETH AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST, IT SHALL NOT BE FORGIVEN HIM, NEITHER IN THIS WORLD, NEITHER IN THE WORLD TO COME. — Matt. xii. 32.

THESE words of Jesus have given rise to much speculation; and many a tender and sensitive conscience has applied to itself the guilt and the condemnation of the unpardonable sin. Is there, then, a sin so heinous, that God refuses to pardon its commission, even when repented of? Can man incur such a measure of guilt, that the infinite Father shall turn his face for ever away from him, and, unsoftened by his penitence and deaf to his pleadings, exclude him hopelessly from the joy of his blessing and the heaven of his presence? Neither in nature, in reason, nor in Scripture, does such a statement find support.

Nevertheless, there is an unpardonable sin; — unpardonable, not because God will not forgive it, but because, in the nature of things, he cannot; — unpardonable, not because the Divine mercy is ever refused to the penitent, but because it implies a con-

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dition of soul which will not repent. The obstacle is not in God's implacability, but in the sinner, — the obstinacy of man himself. The forgiveness of the Deity is infinite as his being. It is not limited by human transgression, or the years of mortality. There can be no sin that is greater than God's mercy; — there can be no period, in time or eternity, at which the possibility of forgiveness ceases. God is committed by his justice, as well as his mercy, — bound by his immutability, as well as his love, — pledged, by all his attributes, — to forgive sin, whenever forgiveness is made possible by compliance with the only condition of forgiveness, a sincere repentance. But there is a state of mind which, while it exists, makes forgiveness an impossibility, because repentance is an impossibility.

The narrative in the gospels makes it very clear what this sin is. The Jews, wilful in their blindness and prejudice, misrepresented the doctrines, and impugned the motives, and derided the claims, of Jesus. They heaped upon him obloquy and abuse; they assailed him with invective and ridicule. And when they could not deny the reality of his miracles, they endeavoured to invalidate their testimony and destroy their influence by ascribing them to the agency of evil spirits. "He casteth out demons by Beelzebub, the prince of the demons." It was this malicious charge that gave rise to the words of Jesus. It was a small thing to him that

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they should treat his person with contempt, and turn his words to a mocking jest; but when he saw them resisting their own convictions, and denying the manifest agency of God, he felt that they were shutting themselves out from the last appeal that could be made, — resisting the only evidence that remained to be brought in support of the truth that would save them. Then he says, Say what you will about me, the Son of Man, — treat me as your passion and prejudice counsel; — all that I do not heed, — in that you act blindly, and may be forgiven. But when the finger of God heals the sick in a moment, and restores reason to its throne in the mind of raving insanity, and touches your own hearts with a responsive throb of conviction, — then if you resist the evidence, — if you blasphemously say it is not the finger of God, but the work of a demon, — then are ye hopelessly lost in your unbelief and your hardness of heart. While you are in such a condition, there is no pardon and no salvation for you.

It is plain that the condemnation cannot apply to any soul, however guilty, that is conscious of guilt, and sincerely seeking deliverance. It is applicable only to a state of utter hardness, that has no feeling of guilt, — of wilful blindness and indifference, that neither desires nor asks for the way of salvation.

Nor is it in relation to simple unbelief that Jesus is speaking. It was not strange that the Jews rejected his claims. They saw him as a stranger, and

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could not know the lofty virtue and divine purity of his life. They knew him only as the humble Nazarene, and could not easily be brought to regard him as the princely Messiah. The prejudices of long-cherished opinion, the strong associations of early education, national pride, and superstitious veneration, — everything in their mental condition, and in their external circumstances, was most unfavorable to their reception of the truths he taught. To be sure, they were witnesses of his wonderful works of healing; but it is to be remembered that multitudes among them laid claim to the same miraculous power. So that, when we come to take all this fairly into account, we shall see that unbelief in Christ was neither so strange nor so criminal then as now. The Jews had not a tenth part of the evidence in support of his claims that we have. And, in our day, the fact of unbelief in Christianity may imply little or no positive guilt in the skeptic. A man's convictions cannot be forced. They are not subject to his will. Christianity may never have been presented to him in its true form, but only a distorted and repulsive view of it. The arguments by which it is sustained may not have been brought before his mind. Early associations and opinions, the influence of which he cannot at once throw off, may keep him long in a state of wavering doubt or positive rejection. Or, again, — and the case is a very common one, — a person may consider himself

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an unbeliever in Christianity, simply because he rejects the common statement and the popular form of Christianity; when, all the while, he has thought more and not less about it than most men, and, if he only knew it, really believes in Christ more heartily, and has a purer conception of Christianity, than the great majority who boast the name. With all such persons, unbelief is a misfortune and not a sin, — an incalculable loss, but scarcely implying guilt. Their position demands of us pity, but not censure, — to convince, but not to condemn.

But there is a state of unbelief which is not to be spoken of so leniently. It is the most unpardonable and the most hopeless condition into which the soul of man can sink. It is that to which Jesus plainly refers. It has three distinguishing characteristics, — a false life, an indifference to truth, and an irreverent spirit.

It is denoted, first, by a false life. I do not mean, simply, a life that falls below the Christian standard, or below the standard of any other person; but a life that is false to the convictions of the individual himself. We have no right to judge an unbeliever in Christianity by the standard of Christianity; we have no right to judge any man by our own standard. But we have a right to pronounce him a false man who does not live up to the standard he himself acknowledges. God demands this of every man, — Pagan no less than Christian, — that he shall be true

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to his own felt convictions; that he shall do the duty whose obligation he clearly sees. The law of progress and growth is written on man's nature and constitution; and progress and growth can only follow from fidelity to duty, — obedience to conscience. When, then, one fails to obey his own moral sense, and so do the highest and best thing he can see as obligatory upon him, all growth must cease. Worse than this, the soul must retrograde, and this fearful penalty must follow. The duty neglected will no longer be seen clearly as a duty. The conviction disobeyed will cease to be a conviction. Gradually the sense and conviction of duty in such a soul will utterly cease. Conscience will die out.

The second feature of the unpardonable sin — the condition of hopeless unbelief — is, an indifference to truth. Clearly as God has written the law of progress on the moral nature of man, has he impressed it, also, on his intellectual nature. The mind seeks knowledge, as the soul seeks goodness, as the aliment of its growth. The condition of a true man implies that he is always seeking higher truth. But if he will not receive that which commends itself to his reason and understanding, because it conflicts with his prejudices or condemns his practice, then to him it shall cease to be a truth. From the moment when such a state of wilful blindness begins, no more light shall enter that mind. Such a person has excluded the truth, — has shut

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the door and barred the windows against her. He has closed his eyes, and refuses to see. He is no longer a seeker after knowledge or truth, and can therefore receive none. — There is more to be said. The truth he has will go away from him. That which he saw before will be less clearly discernible day by day. Knowledge will lose its value, and truth her royal splendor, in his esteem. The result will be, a state of utter indifference to *all* truth. The intellectual faculty, like the moral, will be lost. Reason, like conscience, will die out.

The third feature in this condition of mind is, that it has lost all love of that which is holy, and all veneration for that which is sacred. The native admiration of heroic virtue and sublime self-denial, which God implanted in every soul, it has smothered and crushed. It acknowledges nothing as venerable, it bows before nothing as lofty, it reveres nothing as pure. The abounding goodness of God awakens no grateful piety. The self-devotion of human love incites to no genial return. It laughs at affection, it despises truth, it mocks at piety and ridicules saintliness. Far from prostrating itself before the moral nobility of Jesus, it treats his person with deriding scorn. The sublime truths he declares win it to no obedient homage, but only provoke a bitterer hate. When God works miracles by his hand, it turns them to an impious blasphemy. When he hangs bleeding on the cross, it shakes its head and

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points its finger in derision. To such a condition, where conscience is silent, and reason extinct, and the heart callous, what moral influence can bring salvation? What avenue is left open by which the renovating power of religion can be brought to bear upon the character? It has lost the power to feel the obligation of duty, the beauty of truth, or the divinity of love. This is the state of unpardonable sin. What shall we say of it? What but the solemn language of Jesus, — that it "hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation"?

Shall we venture to go beyond the declaration of Jesus, and believe that, at last, having served out the time of its punishment, it shall be driven through suffering to fear, and through fear to belief, and through belief to supplication and to seeking, and so, at last, be brought to penitence and pardon? So, in God's mercy, I hope and trust. But Jesus nowhere affirms it.

And what, then, is the practical lesson of our subject? This, — the danger of trifling with duty, of resisting truth, of hardening the heart against the appeals that are continually made to its affection, its piety, and its reverence. Every faculty unused is lost. The unfaithful soul parts, gradually, with conscience, reason, and reverence. And when these are gone, what is there left to save it? Conscience, which should have sat at the helm to guide its course over the perilous ocean of time, has fallen asleep at

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its post. Reason, the pilot of its voyage, sits with closed eye, and is blind to the pole-star, Truth, whose steady light is shining in the heaven over the dark waters. The heart, which God's love should rule, and his wisdom enlighten, that still, like the compass, it might be an unerring guide, though reason and conscience both should fail, — the heart has lost its reverence, and owns no homage to the magnet-sway of that great central Heart, from whose infinite fulness flows out the life of a universe, and to whose mighty throbbings all loyal hearts respond in the pulsations of life and love. The needle has rusted to its pivot. The dead heart vibrates not with the heart of God. For such a soul, what is there left to save it?

There is a solemn truth underlying that old doctrine of the Church, that a man might sin away the day of grace, — might resist the pleadings of God's spirit, till, grieved and angry, it should depart from him for ever. Beyond a certain point, he who stifles conscience, and resists truth, and crushes reverence, shall lose them all.

And so we are prepared to understand the conclusion of that touching address of Christ, — "O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto

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you desolate. And now I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall not find me," — shall not find me, he might have said, not because I am far off, but because of your own moral blindness, that cannot see me, — because of your inward corruption, that will not receive me. " But ye shall die in your sins," — the divine powers God gave you shall die out, because of your falseness. " Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say," — and say it in the anguish of your hearts, because you have drunk deep of the cup of iniquity, and have tasted the bitterness of its dregs, — ye shall see no Saviour till ye shall say, — " Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord ! "

January, 1848.

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XIII.

THOUGHT.

A HEART SETTLED UPON A THOUGHT OF WISDOM. — Eccles. xxii. 17.

THOUGHT and Time are the web and woof of life, and the woven fabric is Eternity. Without thought, time were not, nor action, nor sense of being. Thought is consciousness, and what we call *now* is only the reflection of a thought upon itself. All that there is in what we call To-day, is in the life of thought: thought is the spirit's breath. To think is to live; for he who thinks not has no sense of life. Wouldst thou make the most of life, — wouldst thou have the joy of the present, — let Thought's invisible shuttles weave full in the loom of time the moment's passing threads. To think is to live; but with how many are these passing hours as so many loose filaments, never woven together nor gathered, but scattered, ravelling, so many flying ends, confused and worthless! Time and life, unfilled with thought, are useless, unenjoyed, — bringing no pleasure for the present, storing no good for future need. To-day is the golden chance, where-

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with to snatch Thought's blessed fruition, — the joy of the present, the hope of the future. Thought makes the time that is, and thought the eternity to come.

"O bright presence of To-day, let me wrestle with thee, gracious angel,
I will not let thee go except thou bless me; bless me, then, To-day;
O sweet garden of To-day, let me gather of thee, precious Eden,
I have stolen bitter knowledge, give me fruits of life To-day;
O true temple of To-day, let me worship in thee, glorious Zion,
I find none other place nor time than where I am To-day;
O living rescue of To-day, let me run into thee, ark of refuge,
I see none other hope nor chance, but standeth in To-day;
O rich banquet of To-day, let me feast upon thee, saving manna,
I have none other food nor store but daily bread To-day."

But what but thought maketh To-day? He who thinks not has murdered To-day.

Thought is Memory; and all the garnered past is but the picture of this faithful limner, — the clear reflection of Thought's magic mirror. The Past, — he who thinks not is a stranger to its rich and fair domain. It lieth behind him, a cool, still grotto, hung with sparkling gems, and gorgeous with marble sculpture. Wouldst thou not some time retreat from the dusty street and the noontide's scorching beam? Retire, retire with Thought, thy better angel, to this the treasure-house and mausoleum where all thy

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life is sacredly embalmed. Hast thou not learned how holy is the place, — fragrant with the breath of other days, with joys long fled, and childhood's morning flowers? Art thou poor? Behold here thy good deeds laid up, an incorruptible treasure. Art thou alone? Yet here the light of other days shall shine around thee, and faces thou no more shalt greet smile on thee as of old. The Past is thine. It is not dead to thee. Thou hast purchased it by labor and struggle, by love's vow and sorrow's tear. Enter in and possess it. It is thine.

But hast thou not made Memory thy friend, and shrinkest from the Past, because the Past is evil? Dare not to shut it out, for the time is coming when thou must look upon it, — must live in it. Though few remembrances of good are there, and spectres of evil thoughts and deeds affright thee when thou enterest, yet is it needful for thee to dwell therein, and learn to bear the sight. 'T is Heaven's appointed retribution. Thinkest thou to escape it? 'T is Heaven's medicine of mercy to fright thee back to virtue. Refuse it not, for thy welfare, thy salvation, is in it.

And what is anticipation, what is hope, what is faith, but Thought? When the past is chill and lonely, and we turn from its twilight remembrance and its shadowy forms, — when the present is desolate, and duty is stern, and the flesh is weak, and the burden is heavy, and the dream is frightful, — cometh

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Thought's angel with the redemption of to-morrow's hope, with the prophecy of better to come. The cloud is dark over our heads; but before, in our horizon, the sun is still shining, and a rainbow begirds it. The waves overwhelm us; but a fairy skiff with a gentle pilot is sailing towards us, and still, when sinking, we look for deliverance.

"The painful Present is comforted by the Future,
And kind To-morrow beareth half the burdens of To-day."

Let the young heart of wild imaginings curb the too luxuriant fancy, that it be not deceived by a halo; but let the burdened and the sorrowful take counsel of anticipation, and remember the wisdom of hope.

Immortal Thought, how vast is thy domain! Thou givest us power to bring the mighty orbs of heaven within our reach, and find a world of wisdom in an insect's wing. Thou takest us up, and bearest us away to distant climes and distant ages. Through thee we hold converse with prophets and wise men of old time, and drink in the sacred lessons of the past. We soar still higher, above the stars, and even to God's ancient throne, and read his glory and see the image of his face. We learn the sweet lessons of his wondrous love, and hold communion with his spirit, infinite and vast.

The obligation to think, — that is my next point. I say the obligation to think, for thought is a duty.

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Nor let it be supposed that it is a duty easily discharged, or one that may be left to take care of itself. It may indeed be true, that, in our waking hours, the mind is always occupied; but we are all sensible with how much more vigor, and to how much more profit, at some times than others. But, wasteful as we are of many things, of what else are we so prodigal as of time and thought, the most precious of all? The Koran relates, that there are angels in heaven, who think as much in half an hour as we do in a thousand years; and it may be so, for there is no limit to the rapidity of thought. This much is certain, that he lives longest who thinks most thoughts; and in this sense it may be true, that "the child shall die, a hundred years old." And do not a large proportion of the ignorance, the omissions, and the sins of life come of the failure to think? Our plans are not matured, and so they fail. Our resolutions are forgotten, and so unfulfilled. The whole universe of God's majestic handiwork lies around us,—a still more wondrous universe within; and we are wellnigh strangers to it all. The words of earth's wise and gifted ones are written out for us; for us science unfolds its mystic lore; and we heed not their lessons. Great and high privileges of usefulness and progress are ours; and we do not use them, for want of thought.

It is not only a man's duty to think, but to think about the right things. In the next place, then, he

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must have habits of thought ; — that is, he must have set times and seasons which he devotes to strong and worthy thought, — reflection on the greatest and highest themes. Unless he does this, he must fail of all vigorous and high exercise of his mental powers. His mind becomes like a floating chip on the river's current, with which every circling eddy plays fast and loose, — the merest weather-vane, which every idle wind of circumstance may blow about as it will. He has no settled opinions, he has no fixed principles. Such a man's life must fail of all high ends. Here is an infinite field of knowledge ; and it ought to be part of every one's plan of life to make daily some useful acquisitions in it. Here are boundless capacities of growth ; and surely it should be part of every one's ideal to make daily progress in virtue and holiness. Here are many opportunities of usefulness, — the sufferings and wants of our brethren importuning us for solace and alleviation ; and who would not gladly do something to answer this claim ? But he must fail of wisdom, of progress, and of usefulness, who does not think.

But is a man responsible for his thoughts, then, and to what extent ? To this question I reply, that the responsibility for our thoughts and our control over them is far greater than is generally conceived. He who does not take pains to fill his mind with worthy thoughts may well expect that base and wicked ones will take their place. The field un-

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watched will surely be sown with tares, while the owner is sleeping; how much more, if it be not only unwatched, but unsown! Into the house that is left unfurnished and empty the spirits of evil will enter, and take up their abode there. So it is with a man's thoughts. If they are not constrained to profitable themes, they will fix upon those which are contemptible or vile. And it is impossible that the thought should be habitually evil, and the character remain uncorrupted. Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled therewith? In some parts of our country are beds of coal, formed by the gradual accumulation of leaves, that lie now preserved in solid mass, with every tiny line and fibre perfect and unchanged. So does thought petrify into character. Into the soul's still depths fall silently the leaves of thought; yet in a coming eternity they shall all be found embalmed there,—the imperishable chronicles of the spirit's history throughout the forming life of ages.

And beside, every action has its root and beginning in thought. Long before the evil deed is committed which sets the seal to a man's character, the thought of evil has become habitual to him. Watch narrowly your own thoughts, for they are parents of your deeds, good or evil. Watch your own thoughts. They are forewarning messengers to put you on your guard against coming temptation, — the dark clouds, preshadowing the gathering tempest. I

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know that a bad thought does not of necessity imply guilt in the thinker.

> "Evil into the mind of man
> May come and go, so unapproved, and leave
> No spot or blame behind."

But it must not only be unbidden and unapproved, — it must be resisted and driven out. When Eve's ear was won to listen to the seducing voice of the serpent, the tempter's victory was wellnigh gained. He who parleys with an evil thought will ere long give it full and free possession of his heart, and then the evil deed is not far off.

If you would know yourself, your real conditions and tendencies, watch well what thoughts they are that come up most naturally and readily when your mind is free from its habitual engrossments, and left to fall back upon itself. What guests plead most for entrance then, and find most ready welcome? The knowledge of this single point will shed a flood of light upon your character. What thoughts are they, my brother, that most frequently come up in your leisure and unoccupied moments? Does some scheme of aggrandizement, some vision of wealth, fill up these interstices? Are your thoughts of gain, of hoards, of luxurious ease and splendid show? Beware, beware! for Mammon is clutching at your heart, stealthily sapping the foundation of your principles and paralyzing your best affections, and

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robbing your soul of its noblest aspirations and its better portion.

Or is it the wild dreamings of youthful passion, — the temptings of voluptuous imagining, — that crowd upon the mind released from constraint? In God's name take heed to thyself, then, for the demon of sensuality is luring thee to destruction. Thou art fostering a serpent in thy bosom that shall wind its scaly folds about thine heart, to crush all purity and nobleness out of it. Give not thyself up to the most loathsome of all the spirits of evil, that he should enter in to possess thy soul, — to hold mad riot's rule awhile, and leave a wreck of shame.

A thought ends in a habit, and habit fastens its chains resistlessly upon us. He who is wise will crush the thought in its weakness, and not nurse and foster it into an enemy he cannot subdue. For a bad thought cannot be annihilated, any more than the soul into which it enters. It has been there, and has left its footprint; and if we have not driven it out, it will come again. And who can measure the influence of an evil thought? If it come often, it will mould the character to its likeness; yea, it will write itself upon the countenance, so that, though the deed it leads to may be kept secret, or remain uncommitted, yet men shall read its handwriting on the face, and turn away from him who cherishes it, they know not why. Let no man think he can escape the contagion or the consequences of an evil

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thought. It will cling to him like his shadow. It will reveal itself in careless speech, or in some unconscious look and gesture. It will set its seal upon the whole man, and go to fix his reputation in the world. It will confirm its dominion over him till he is its victim and its slave.

A single thought of evil, — it will eat the heart like a gangrene till all its soundness and purity are gone, and nothing but corruption is left. It is a consuming fire, whose relentless heat burns unappeased till all has crumbled to ashes. The world is full of such warning wrecks.

So have I seen a fair spring bud, that swelled with promise in morning's dew and sunshine; but when I looked, at evening, it had withered, for a worm was consuming it within.

So have I heard of a noble vessel, that had outridden many a storm, but in the calm stillness of a summer sea sank down beneath the engulphing waves. There was an unsound plank, and the leak, unobserved till the moment of danger, could not be stopped then. So is an evil thought in a man's heart.

But a wise, a good thought, — who can tell its power? It fills and satisfies the soul. It shines out in the countenance. It speaks from the lips. It goes kindling from heart to heart, and the strain of its music goes round the world.

There will be some ruling principle, some lead-

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ing thought, in every man's mind. It will be the aim of the life, the key-stone to the whole character. And what shall that thought be ?

But one thing is fit to be such a ruling and central principle. But one thing is worthy to be an aim of life to a reasonable and immortal being. It is "a heart settled upon a thought of wisdom," — a heart and a life consecrated to God, to truth, to spiritual things.

Till thou hast found this thou art not living the life of a man, but of a beast. 'T is as if a bird should forego his wings, — as if the sun should renounce his light.

This is the crown of thy manliness, the seal of thy nobility, the talisman of thy peace. Come, if thou hast not done it, and pledge thy life to truth and holiness and love. Come, kindle on thy heart's altar the flame of a consecrating purpose. Come, fix thy heart upon a thought of wisdom, and bend thy noblest energies to the service of Almighty God and his law written on thy heart.

Then round this living principle shall all pure thoughts, as round a central crystal, arrange themselves in fair and perfect symmetry. A new and higher wisdom shall inspire thee ; for the heart sends tides of life to the head. New light shall shine upon thee, and thine eye shall see truths unperceived before ; for the pure in heart see God and all things. New peace shall be thine, and holy hopes,

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and a sense of greatness and dignity hitherto unrecognized shall pervade thy being. Life shall be ennobled, and a high and divine mission set before thee. And this kindling thought shall shine out in thy life, shedding beauty and healing upon others' pathway. It shall write itself in lines of inspiration on thy forehead, as on the face of Jesus glowed the light of God's love. It shall dwell within thee, a sanctifying light, to purify thy heart from every stain of evil, and fill it with heaven's exceeding peace.

In the darkness of night, the cloud-begirt earth seems to lie dumb in the awful gloom. The birds hush their song, and hide themselves in the leafy covert. The shrinking flowers close their delicate petals, and the verdure and the beauty of the landscape is changed to a funeral pall.

But mark how the first beams of day dispel the darkness, and create all things anew. The flowers open at the gentle touch of the sunbeam, and shed their fragrance on the grateful air. The birds wake their jubilant song, the tree-tops wave in the morning breeze, the dewy grass-tips glisten in the light, and the wide landscape smiles a welcome to the king of day. So is the light of a religious purpose in the heart.

My brother, have you not found the true end of life? Are you still dissatisfied, and looking to some anticipated good the future shall bring? Be sure the

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good you seek lies in this alone, — the consecration of yourself to God and duty. This is your want if you have it not, — your exceeding blessedness if you have, — a heart settled upon a thought of wisdom.

June, 1846.

THE END.

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